

Japan
Fisheries
Association



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Views and Opinions of Japan's Fisheries Industry

JFA Winter Evening Reception

Promotion of Exports of High-quality Japanese Marine Products Encouraged

The Japan Fisheries Association (JFA) hosted the Winter Evening Reception inviting fisheries and commercial attaches from Embassies and Consulates in Tokyo on February 20, 2006.

The guest speaker, Ms. Mari Izumi, Director, Export Promotion Office, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, presented Japan's policy to promote the exportation of food through what is called the "Positive Agriculture Policy." Following is a summary of her presentation.

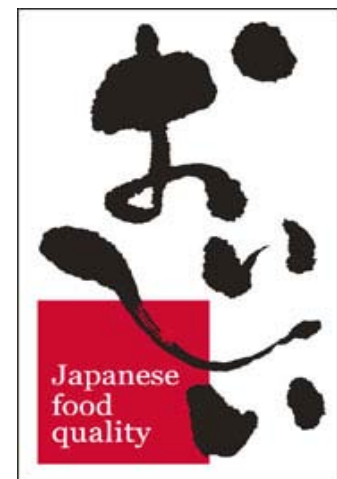
Exports of agricultural, forestry and fish products from Japan in 2005 totaled 331 billion Yen. The food export value was 5% of the value of food imports to Japan, although it had increased by 12% over the preceding year. Forty-four percent of the food export value came from fish and fish products. Main importers were the USA, Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, and Korea.

Although Japan's exports of food are still small compared with her imports, there are reasons to believe that the Japanese industry still has a chance to increase its exports. Japanese cuisine is popular around the world. Although it is relatively expensive, it is high in

quality (taste, nutrition, safety and appearance). On top of that, the markets in East and South-East Asia are growing and the market for fish is also growing.

Ms. Izumi further noted that, under such circumstances, the government of Japan has started to promote exports of food with the target of doubling the export amount in 5 years (2004-2009). Such promotion of exports, she said, is based on the "Positive" agricultural policy that the government has adopted as its national strategy. In accordance with this policy, the government has programs to support businesses to get into foreign markets by supplying useful information to the industry and hosting food fairs and temporary workshops to promote exports of Japanese food.

The government is also making necessary adjustments internally to cope with the requirements of importers by examining and adjusting to tariffs and quarantines of importing countries. The program also includes the protection of product brands and intellectual property rights and the adjustment of domestic production and distribution to export



The Japanese writing in the above logo says "Delicious."



businesses. The next step is to increase the number of exporters with a challenging spirit, support export-oriented sectors/businesses and cooperate with the promotion of Japanese food culture abroad, Ms. Izumi said.

Regarding the importance of activating Japan's exports of fishery products, JFA President Isao Nakasu

stated in an earlier interview: "the Japanese fish market is now being saturated, despite our efforts to deter the declining demand in the domestic market, while imported fish is rapidly increasing in recent years. It would be a practical challenge for the Japanese industry to strive to develop overseas markets, such as China, where demand for high-quality fish is growing."

SYMPOSIUM

Experts Warn Against Abuse and Misuse of Precautionary Principle in Fisheries Management

The Japanese Foreign Ministry and the Association for Comparative Study of Legal Culture sponsored a symposium in Tokyo on February 16 under the name: "Recent Trend of the Management of Marine Living Resources: Sustainable Use and Application of the Precautionary Approach." Two foreign guest speakers delivered presentations.

Under the title of "Sustainable Use and the Conservation of Natural Resources," Dr. Jonathan Hutton, Chair, Sustainable Use Specialist Group, Species Survival Commission, The World Conservation Union (IUCN), stated that sustainable use is aimed at the conservation of fish species, and allowing the use of the resources within the capacity of their renewable capability by properly managing them. There are some arguments that wildlife is put to risk because of the concept of sustainable use or because the industries take advantage of sustainable use as a cover for their activities. The proponents of such criticism apparently assume that the objective of sustainable use is consumption. However, this argument is not appropriate because the aim of the concept of sustainable use is the conservation of fish species.

Next, Dr. Rosie Cooney, Coordinator, Precautionary Principle Project, a joint initiative of Fauna & Flora International (FFI) IUCN, TRAFFIC International and Resource Africa, spoke under the title of "Riding the wave: precaution from principle to practice in marine regulation." She pointed out that the precautionary principle requires measures against uncertainties. As the ecosystem has unpredictable uncertainties, the precautionary principle has been introduced into the Convention on Biological Diversity and national laws on natural resources and the environment. However, there is no common understanding on the principle, and diverse issues tend to arise when putting it into practice. In 1996, for example, Australia obliged the



(From right to left) Dr.Hutton, Dr.Cooney, Prof.Hiroyuki Matsuda, Dr.Yoshio Kaneko

use of the precautionary principle in its Fisheries Law, but failed in its application as the number of over-harvested species increased to 17 from 4 before that requirement was introduced. The failure was blamed on such factors as the difficulty in implementing the requirement, opposition from the fishing industry, and a lack of consensus in the interpretation of the principle. It is important to understand that there exist diverse risks in implementing the precautionary principle, Dr. Cooney said.

Announcement

The Japan Fisheries Association will host the 8th International Seafood & Technology Expo at the Tokyo International Center (Big Sight), July 19-21, 2006.

(For further information, contact Seafood Expo Secretariat at <http://www.k-ide.com/seafood>)

MARKET TREND

Increase in Eating-out by Single-Person Households Causing Intense Fish Price Competition

The lifestyle of Japanese consumers has been diversifying from year to year. Amid this change, single-person households have emerged as a new social stratum. Supermarkets, convenience stores and the restaurant industry are taking steps to cope with this phenomenon.

Eating-out has increased conspicuously because single-person households do not proportionately save much by cooking at home. While the increase in eating-out was triggered by the increase in single-person households, it has also spread among two-person or two-generation households as the restaurant industry itself has developed markedly.

Also large retailers, such as supermarket and convenience store chains, are stepping up sales of ready-to-eat fish products targeting single-person and other households.

As a result, these large-lot buyers of fish have come to take the initiative in the marketing of marine products

in Japan. They have reduced their sales costs by mechanizing cooking and preparation processes and are pressing producers for price reductions against the backdrop of their powerful purchasing capabilities. At present, intense competition for this new market is causing fish prices to continue to fall annually.

The fisheries industry is feeling threatened by this development. Some industry analysts term this trend as a “deflationary spiral.” It is apparently caused by the fact that large-lot buyers, such as supermarkets and convenience store chains and the restaurant industry, which have taken the lead in the market, do not have sales know-how for fishery products and are trying to compete only through price dumping.

The concern of the fisheries industry is that they face the risk of broad confusion in the market unless they develop a demand for higher-quality and high-value-added products.

SCIENCE

Research Team Found Taste Is Encoded in Brain's Prefrontal Area

A joint research team of the National Food Research Institute and Nippon Suisan, a leading Japanese fishery firm, announced on March 2, 2006, that they have discovered the prefrontal area of man's brain is activated in encoding the sense of taste. Prefrontal activity had been known for encoding information obtained by other senses such as visual, auditory and tactile senses but the effect of its activity was found for the first time in relation to taste.

The result of the research was introduced in the online version of the U.S. scientific journal “NeuroImage” dated February 10, 2006.

In an experiment conducted by the team, eight kinds of solutions that have sweet, sour, salty, and glutamate (umami) tastes were prepared as samples to stimulate the sense of taste. Ten right-handed adults, who volunteered to participate in the experiment, tasted two

out of the eight types of solutions on a continuous basis and were asked to tell whether the two solutions are the same or different.

It often happens that we do not recognize the taste of food clearly when we eat while engaging in other activities. The result of the experiment suggests that one of the causes of this phenomenon is that the prefrontal brain area is used in common both by the sense of taste and other senses, and necessary resources for the brain's information processing functions compete among them.

Also, it has been shown by other research in recent years that it is difficult to control the amount of food one consumes while watching television.

The team's research suggests that eating while doing other things can lead to over-eating because such an action deteriorates the brain's information processing efficiency for taste and causes one to be less aware of the delicate change of taste, which occurs when one feels fullness.

The team said the results of its research would

provide useful knowledge for improving our eating habits and preventing obesity.

Searching Fish Using Satellites

A Special Exhibition in Tokyo

A special exhibition was held in the “Consumers’ Room” of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in Tokyo, December 19-22, 2005, under the theme of “Searching Fish by Artificial Satellites.”

The exhibition was designed to explain, using panels and video films, how artificial satellites are being used to obtain all kinds of data on sea conditions, which are

provided to fishers by the Japan Fisheries Information Service Center.

A total of 1,074 people visited during the exhibition period.

One exhibit that attracted the attention of the visitors was under the slogan: “Artificial satellites challenge high fuel costs. They protect and foster Japan’s fisheries.” The system is designed to determine the locations of fishing grounds via satellites and enable an analysis of the stock status of a certain fish species.

An elementary school pupil, who visited the exhibition, said: “It was a surprise to know such new technology is being used for fisheries. If technology on satellites for fisheries advances as it has for military use, it will surely make it easier for fishermen to catch fish.”

SEAFOOD EXPO

More regional fisheries organizations and fisheries cooperative associations take part in the 3rd Osaka Seafood Show —The number of visitors increases by 600 over the previous show—

The Japan Fisheries Association (JFA) sponsored the 3rd Japan International Seafood & Technology Expo Osaka at Intex Osaka on February 16 and 17. This show seems to have taken root as a major winter event dealing with marine products in this western commercial city. The Expo was a success with a total of 8,807 people visiting the site during the two-day period—more than 600 over last year’s 8164.

Speaking on behalf of the organizer at the opening ceremony in the morning of February 16, Isao Nakasu, President of the JFA, said: “At this year’s Expo about 150 companies and organizations are participating as exhibitors. The scale of the exhibition is more or less the same as the previous show, but the present show is featured by increased participation by regional fisheries organizations and fisheries cooperative associations.”

He also noted: “Among exhibits, we can see tasty marine products having regional characteristics. Furthermore, many fishery product suppliers in the Kansai Region centering on Osaka are participating.”

“Although Japan leads the world in the consumption of fishery products in terms of both quality and quantity, suppliers seem to be taking this situation for granted



Tape-cutting ceremony at the Expo

and tend to neglect further efforts to step up marketing. As a result, they are not able to respond properly to diversifying demand from consumers. Consumers now have a large variety of food to choose from. We need to reinforce our efforts on how we can better appeal the excellent quality of our products to consumers and boost sales. Events such as this show will certainly provide a good opportunity to pursue that goal. It is my hope that exhibitors will use this show as an occasion to test their capability to improve their sales,” Nakasu said.