

Japan Fisheries Association



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Views and Opinions of Japan's Fisheries Industry

JFA President's address

JFA President stresses the potential of fisheries as a food supplying industry will be great

In the New Year's address of the JFA monthly bulletin "Fisheries World," Isao Nakasu, president of the Japan Fisheries Association, stressed the importance of using limited fishery resources with utmost care.

Reviewing the past year, Nakasu said that 2008 was a year full of difficulty for the fisheries industry. First, he mentioned the abnormal upsurge in fuel prices that occurred from spring to summer, which exposed many fishers around the world to the serious risk of survival. Although the financial crisis originating in the United States led to the collapse of "the natural resources bubble" and eased fuel prices, it caused, at the same time, a rapid setback in the world economy, causing a decrease in consumption.

He also pointed to a series of accidents and scandals surrounding the safety and security of

food, including seafood, which occurred in 2008. It should be the most fundamental principle for food suppliers to secure consumer trust in food quality, he said.

Meanwhile, "the increasing demand in seafood around the globe," he observed, "has provided a valuable opportunity to recognize anew the limited nature of fishery resources and the importance of their sustainable use. The global rise in grain prices last year exposed the fact that the basis of the supply of food, which is indispensable for the survival of mankind, remains fragile. Fishers are now asked to make a positive approach to the management of fishery resources, both at home and overseas, and ensure their sustainable use."

"Although a difficult situation is predicted for this year as well, I believe that the potential of fisheries as a food supplying industry will be great in a medium- and long-term range," Nakasu concluded.

MEL Japan News



Red snow crab fishery is the first to obtain MEL certification

The red snow crab fishery in the Sea of Japan is the first to have obtained production stage certification under Marine Eco-label Japan (MEL Japan). The decision was made at MEL Japan's meeting on December 10, 2008.

MEL Japan started recruiting applicants for its eco-labeling certification in April 2008. The Sea of Japan Crab Pot Fishery Association in Sakaiminato City, Tottori Prefecture, was the first to apply for MEL Japan production stage certification for its 12 member fishing vessels licensed by the

Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. The 12 vessels are from Tottori, Shimane and Niigata Prefectures facing the Sea of Japan.

The Japan Fisheries Resource Conservation Association, which is the certification body for MEL Japan, carried out both document examination and on-site inspection in compiling its final report. The final certification of MEL Japan's Council came after the examination of the findings by the Audit Committee.

At the same time, MEL Japan endorsed the cer-



Sea of Japan red snow crab with MEL Japan eco-label logo

tification on the chain of custody for six firms dealing in the distribution of red snow crab.

The certification scheme of MEL Japan is in line with the eco-label guidelines adopted by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in March 2005. It is the first fisheries eco-labeling scheme in Japan, taking into account the actual situation of fisheries in Japan having a long unique history in fishery production and fishery resource management. The scheme is managed with the participation of a wide range of stakeholders including fishers, scientists, distributors and consumers.

Masato Nishino, president of the Sea of Japan Crab Pot Fishery Association, said: "We are pleased to have been granted the first MEL Japan certification about seven months after we made the application."

"We are often asked why we have applied for this eco-label certification. Currently, fish are being harvested in excess of the scope of sustainable use, and, if this situation persists, the Japanese people may not be able to continue eating fish. When we consider what we can do as fishers for the future food policy of Japan, we found it is crucial to first preserve the fishery resources and hand them down to future generations. Therefore, we decided to obtain the eco-label for our fishery in order to appeal to distributors and consumers our posture to put that concept into practice."

"In the future, we will promote our catch

through MEL Japan marine-ecolabels and also try strenuously in our resource management to live up to the ideal of the scheme," Nishino said.

At the moment, certification examination is expected to be implemented for the snow crab and flathead flounder fisheries of the Offshore Trawl Fishery Association of Tottori Prefecture as well as the stardust shrimp fishery of the Yui Fishermen's Association and Oigawa Town Fisheries Co-operative Association in Shizuoka Prefecture.

MEL Japan scheme explained to ICFA at its annual meeting in Rome

The annual meeting of the International Coalition of Fisheries Association (ICFA) was held in Rome for three days from November 11, 2008. The European Union (EU), Canada, Spain, Chinese Taipei, Chile, New Zealand, Norway, the United States, Peru and Japan sent their representatives, with Spain serving as the Chair.

At the meeting, participants exchanged views on a variety of issues that could impact world fisheries, and discussed the strategies to be taken in the future. On the third day, ICFA delegates had an informal meeting with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

Below is a summary of some of the major issues discussed at the meeting reported by Masashi Nishimura of the Japan Fisheries Association, who attended the meeting as a member of the Japanese delegation.

(1) Marine eco-label

Japan outlined its marine eco-label (MEL Japan) to the ICFA representatives. Developing and managing the scheme includes cooperation from nationwide networks such as the Fisheries Research Agency and the Japanese Society of Fisheries Science—the two organizations having the highest-level expertise on fishery stock assessment in Japan—as well as the services of the officials in charge of regional stock management in the actual on-site examinations. At the same time, the scheme was designed to widely promote the concept of sustainable fisheries while ensuring trustworthy certification at a relatively low cost.

Participants from other countries questioned whether MEL Japan aims to achieve labeling for premium products or whether its application range will be wider. Japanese delegates responded that the promotion of sustainable fisheries, which is the primary objective of eco-labeling, would only become possible when the scheme is practiced widely.

Further, Japan explained that eco-labeling can be used not only for individual products but also



MEL Japan eco-labeling scheme introduced to 170,000 visitors at the Eco Products Expo in Tokyo, December 2008

as a means to promote a regional approach toward the goal of sustainable fisheries for local fishing communities. In point of fact, the fishers who have so far applied for MEL Japan certification have such a high awareness.

(2) IUU fishing and excessive fishing capacity

The U.S. and the EU made presentations on their regulations for IUU fisheries. The U.S. member said that the U.S. government could take measures to deny port entry of a vessel identified as engaging in IUU fishing under the reauthorized Magnuson Act or prohibit the importation of seafood from a country in which such a vessel is registered. It said that some countries are already being considered as potential candidates to be included in the IUU list.

The EU member, on the other hand, said the EU government will regulate IUU fishing by obliging all the seafood entering the EU to carry catch documentation. The EU regulations will be adopted in September 2009 and will be enforced effective January 2010.

On November 23, after the annual meeting ended, the ICFA Secretary presented a letter to Joe Borg, Commissioner responsible for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs of the European Commission, requesting for cautious adjustments so that nationally- or regionally-led regulations may not constitute obstacles to international seafood trade.

(3) High seas trawl fishery

A 2004 United Nations resolution regarding the high seas trawl fishery calls for measures against the impacts on fragile marine ecosystems. Upon the adoption of the U.N. resolution in 2006, the FAO and regional fisheries organizations became the main promoters of concrete efforts on the management of high seas trawling. The FAO developed guidelines for this fishery, and now work is underway to establish regional fisheries management organizations—one each in the North-western Pacific and South Pacific.

The U.N. will assess those efforts in 2009, and ICFA will continue to send its representatives to take part in the U.N. consultations.

(4) IWC

Regarding the chronically dysfunctional International Whaling Commission (IWC), Japan explained the course of discussions with a focus on the results of meetings to normalize the Commission as well as the consultations on introducing a "safety net" convention which would provide a framework to continue the management of whale resources in case the IWC collapses because of its malfunctions.

Japan also drew the attention of the participants to the fact that the extremist animal welfare group Sea Shepherd Conservation Society

engaged in violent interference of Japan's whale research in the Antarctic and some of its members are on an international wanted list by the Japanese police. Japan solicited the attention of other members, by emphasizing that this issue is not only confined to whaling.

To the question whether Japan would hold fast to its position on whaling in the years to come, Japanese delegates responded that Japan is committed to pursue the sustainable utilization of whale resources. They pointed out that the meetings for normalizing the IWC were held just because the IWC is not normal, and the discussions on a safety net convention is proof that the risk of collapse of the IWC has now assumed a greater reality as science-based management and the sustainable use of whale resources are not duly respected.

(5) Election of Chair and the venue of next annual meeting

Spain was re-elected as the Chair of ICFA for another two-year term. The next meeting will be held in Rome in October 2009.

Topics

80 mil. tons of aquaculture production will be needed in 2030: FAO COFI report

The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) made public a report on challenges to fishery aquaculture to meet the growing demand for seafood in the world at a meeting of the Aquaculture Subcommittee of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) held in early October.

In the report, the subcommittee estimated that the world population in 2030 will reach 8.32 billion. It further pointed out that, in order to maintain the annual per-capita seafood consumption of 16.7 kilograms as of 2006, it would be necessary to increase aquaculture production by 28.5 million tons from the present 52 million tons to 80.5 million tons.

Fishery production in the world has stayed in the order of 90 million tons since the latter half of the 1990s, but aquaculture production, led by China, grew substantially, exceeding 50 million tons in 2006. As consumption of meat and poultry is slowing down in the wake of the outbreak of BSE and bird flu, demand for seafood has been expanding. Aquaculture production has supported this demand, showing an increase of 11.8% between 1985 and 1995, and continuing a near 10% growth afterwards.

The expansion, however, paced down in the 2000s, with the growth rate shrinking to 6.1%. The report noted that it might not be an easy task to

boost aquaculture production to the order to 80 million tons by 2030 while ensuring preservation of the environment at producing places.

What's the meaning of the IWC resolution against violence of SS?

Not only international law but the resolution of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) against violent acts of Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SS) against Japan's whale research fleets in the Antarctic have been trampled upon again.

Kyodo Senpaku Kaisha, Ltd., the owner of the Japanese research vessels in the Antarctic, said on February 10 that the international community must start applying global maritime laws, which protect ships and their crews from the type of violence being perpetrated on the high-seas by the renegade Dutch vessel, Steve Irwin operated by the SS.

"A group of extremists is deliberately ramming vessels and trying to disable their propellers. The United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) establishes clear rules to prevent the high seas from being a lawless zone. Living up to these UNCLOS obligations represents a test for the governments of the Netherlands and Australia, which have so far hesitated to apply agreed international maritime rules to prevent these criminal acts," Mr. Kazuo Yamamura, the President of Kyodo Senpaku said.

"Over the last week, we have witnessed Sea Shepherd members firing projectiles at the Japanese vessels, throwing acid-filled glass bottles onto our decks and deploying specially-designed fouling lines to damage our propellers, among other illegal acts. Then they escalated the attacks by ramming two of our ships--the Yushin Maru No.2 and Yushin Maru No.3. The vessels have been considerably damaged."

"Failure to apply international agreements provides support to this animal rights group's use of violence and undermines the rule of law. By allowing this Dutch vessel safe haven in port, the Australian Government is complicit in sanctioning criminal acts on the high seas. These maritime laws are not options. If they are not applied, they are of little value."

"The escalating terror attacks will necessitate consideration of new security strategies to protect our ships and crews," Mr. Yamamura said.

"This is no longer an issue of whaling, but has become more about the international community permitting this Dutch ship to commit criminal acts at sea and thereby putting our crews' lives at risk." Mr. Yamamura urged the governments of both Australia and New Zealand to no longer allow the SS safe haven in either country.

ISARIBI believes that any IWC member country that does not deny the SS vessel's entry into its port should know that it is ignoring the IWC resolution adopted by consensus and admitting violent activities.

NOAA identifies 6 nations as allowing IUU fishing

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce submitted a report to Congress on January 13 identifying six nations whose fishing vessels were engaged in illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing in 2007 or 2008.

The six nations are France, Italy, Libya, Panama, the People's Republic of China, and Tunisia.

The report says that fishing vessels from those nations do not comply with the provisions established by international fisheries management organizations.

Japanese sushi enthusiastically accepted by Chinese consumers

In early November 2008, seafood distributors from Saeki City, Oita Prefecture in western Japan, presented a variety of Japanese sushi at a food exhibition in Dalian, China.

Saeki City, facing the Bungo Waterway, is known for its bountiful supply of fish, including prawn, flounder, yellowtail, mackerel, squid, and sardine--all of which are used as excellent sushi materials. The people of Saeki are proud of sushi using their local fish, and decided to convey their specialties to the Chinese people.

At the exhibition booth, decorated by colorful fishing vessel flags and with fishermen's songs in the background, many people waited in a long cue to have a taste of sushi. Chinese visitors who had a mouthful of sushi were all smiles, saying "Delicious!"

The making of sushi rice and the skillful cutting of fish into slices were demonstrated before the crowd of people.

Explained that the subtle combination of vinegared rice and raw fish is the essence of sushi, a representative food of Japan, Chinese visitors nodded with satisfaction.

The exhibitors were delighted to see that sushi, which had been one of the local foods in Japan, has now become truly an international favorite.