

**Japan  
Fisheries  
Association**

**ISARIBI**  
**漁火**  
**Fishing Fire**

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**Views and Opinions of Japan's Fisheries Industry**

**President's message**

## Restoration from the Disaster

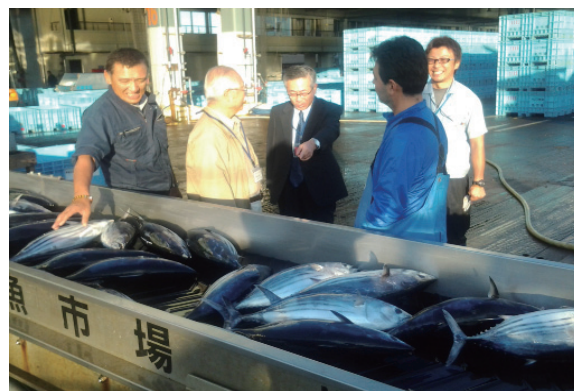
Four years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011. The damage to fisheries amounted to 1.3 trillion yen, almost all of which was covered by the government's budget. Thanks to efforts made by those in the fishing industry, almost all sunken fishing ports (90%) have been leveled up and nearly all fishing vessels (mainly small vessels) have been restored (90%). This has resulted in fish landings recovering to more than 80% of the pre-disaster level.

However, on the processing and distribution front, restoration of lost sales channels has been slow due to a number of problems, including shortages of human resources and ingredients. Only half of processing/distribution businesses have managed to increase their production capacity to more than 80% of their pre-disaster level, and only 40% have boosted their net sales to over 80% of their pre-disaster level. The smaller the business scale, the slower the speed of recovery. Restoration efforts are still needed.

To restore the fishery processing industry in disaster-hit areas as early as possible and regain lost sales channels, we must take on new challenges based on innovative ideas in addition to reviving processing facilities and carrying out other conventional initiatives. Specifically, we should host business negotiation meetings for fishery and fishery processing businesses in disaster-hit areas to address domestic seafood demand, and support export promotion to promote demand outside Japan.

On June 16 and 17, the Japan Fisheries Association hosted an exhibition/business negotiation event in Sendai for fishery businesses in disaster-hit areas. Our aim was to help fishery processing businesses regain and expand their sales channels and increase sales.

At the same time, the accident at the Fukushima nuclear power plant is continuing to cause concern for consumers due to leakage of contaminated water, and groundless negative rumors are a serious obstacle to



JFA head Shirasu (center) visits a restored fish market in the disaster area

the restoration of fisheries.

Fishermen have made tremendous efforts to conduct ongoing rigorous monitoring of radioactive cesium and pilot fishery operations offshore of Fukushima. This is leading to expansion of the fishing zone and more marketable fish species.

The Japanese government is working to eliminate or mitigate import restrictions imposed by other countries against Japanese seafood. The Japan Fisheries Association has also leveraged every opportunity available, including Fishing Industry Consultations, FAO and other international settings, to provide explanations on the safety of Japanese seafood. As a result of these efforts, the international community is showing increased understanding, and there are signs of movement toward easing or lifting of the restrictions.

However, South Korea has been strengthening its import restrictions since September 2013. In response, the Japanese government launched a complaint with the WTO in order to expedite a solution, claiming that South Korea's actions violate the WTO agreement.

Japan will continue to rigorously monitor its seafood and

strive to prevent contaminated products from entering the market.

In any case, Japan's worldwide recognition for being a major seafood supplier cannot be regained without achieving full restoration from the disaster. In addition to providing consumers with a stable supply of seafood, the fisheries industry shoulders the important role of sustaining local communities and developing national land in a well-balanced manner. To fulfill this role, it is crucial for the industry to attract people to local areas and revitalize their regional fisheries industry by

widely publicizing their fishery resources and local food specialties.

The northern Pacific Ocean offshore Sanriku is said to produce the highest amount of seafood among the world's top three fishing grounds. The area is indeed a "sea of treasure." We must make the most of its abundant fishery resources to expand demand for seafood in and outside Japan. At the same time, we should promote tourism by leveraging seafood to attract people to and invigorate local regions.

## 2015 Japan-Russia salmon fishery talks

# Japan-Russia negotiations over salmon driftnet fisheries in Russia's EEZ for 2015

**Yoshiyuki Shige, Managing Director  
Japan Fisheries Association**

**N**egotiations between Japan and Russia over salmon driftnet fisheries by Japanese fishing vessels within Russia's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) for 2015 opened in a considerably strained atmosphere, unlike the negotiations in past years, because of the following turn of events.

First and foremost, one can point to the ever intensifying strife within Russia caused by the differences of interest among regions in Russia as well as the differences in fishing methods. This was a political confrontation at the central government-level in Moscow between Sakhalin State--where driftnet fisheries constitute the mainstay of salmon fishing (as with Japanese fishermen)--and Kamchatka State--where coastal salmon catches largely depend on set-net fisheries.

To date, Kamchatka State is lobbying the Moscow government that driftnet fisheries should be prohibited because the catch by set-net fisheries has been affected by the stock decline caused by the catch of salmon in the offshore area by driftnet fishing vessels. Sakhalin State, on the contrary, insists that such an assertion is a false accusation lacking scientific grounds. This dispute has continued, time after time, over the past years.

In face of this confrontation, Moscow had taken a negative stance toward the view supporting a ban on driftnet fisheries on the grounds that the overall production in set-net fisheries had been growing smoothly and Russian scientific institutes are of the view that there is no problem of a salmon stock decline. Further, the Russian President's Office and the Foreign Ministry have considered that a cautious approach to

this issue is necessary because the driftnet fisheries are related to the fisheries relationship with Japan.

However, some new factors not observed in past years emerged this year. First, the Senator who was the chief flag waver for the driftnet ban in Kamchatka won to his side the Speaker of the Russian Federal Parliament who exerts strong influence in the Senate. This resulted in weakening the strength of the Parliament members from Sakhalin who oppose the ban of driftnet fisheries.

Second, according to reports of the Russian mass media, the proponents of the ban gained the strong support of the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) of the United States that had earlier staged an extensive campaign for the prohibition of driftnet fisheries on the high seas. Their stepped-up propaganda for the salmon driftnet ban both in and outside the Russian Parliament--on a scale that had not been seen in the past--strongly influenced the movement toward the ban.

The third factor was the shuffling of leadership within the Federal Agency for Fishery (hereafter referred to as the "Fishery Agency"). Andrei Krainy, who had tremendous influence as the head of this independent agency, was ousted from his post. The Fishery Agency was rearranged as a subordinate office of the Agriculture Ministry, and Vice Minister Ilya Shestakov was named as a chief of the agency. The new leaders, including Shestakov himself, showed no understanding at all of the historical diplomatic development of fisheries relations with Japan nor to the past process of salmon fisheries negotiations. The traditional views of the former negotiators at the Fishery Agency and the Foreign Ministry were brushed aside, and the issue of salmon fisheries involving Japan

came to be handled based solely on Russia's domestic political situation. For instance, the supporters of the ban were quite unacquainted with fish stock science, and just parroted the unscientific claims of conservationists supporting the driftnet ban.

Earlier, the former leaders of the Fishery Agency and researchers at the fisheries research institutes had claimed from a scientific viewpoint that the salmon stock is in a favorable condition and opposed the claim of Kamchatka to ban salmon driftnet fishing as misleading. But they came to keep their mouths shut about this issue once the new leaders of the Fishery Agency set out their support of the driftnet ban bill.

The fourth factor was the deterioration of the international political climate surrounding the Japan-Russia relationship. Last year, Japan joined in the economic sanctions against Russia, led by the European Union and the U.S., in the wake of the annexation of Crimea by Russia. At first, the domestic tenor of the argument within Russia did not regard Japan's joining in the sanctions as problematic as it could be a mere gesture considering its relations with the U.S. However the mood toward Japan took a turn for the worse from around the time when Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe turned down the invitation of President Vladimir Putin to attend the ceremony marking the 70th Anniversary of the Victory in World War II on May 9 in Moscow, and instead chose to visit the U.S. to meet with President Barack Obama. By contrast, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry attended the event in Moscow to meet with Putin. To make things worse, Abe visited Ukraine, the country then openly in conflict with Russia, around the time he attended the summit meeting of seven industrialized nations in Brussels in June. The news of his talk with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko was widely reported with photos in the Russian media. Under such diplomatic circumstances, it can be easily conjectured that the Russian government's consideration for Japan--that had once existed in the decision-making process regarding the driftnet ban issue--has vanished into thin air.

On the domestic front in Russia, the Sakhalin State government and salmon driftnet fishermen promoted their lobbying activities enthusiastically to oppose the passage of the driftnet prohibition bill in Moscow. The Japanese government and particularly the Japanese embassy in Moscow, on their part, acted on the Russian authorities for this cause. Despite such efforts, however, President Putin signed the driftnet prohibition bill on June 29. At the time of the passage of the bill, a high-ranking Russian government official expressed the view that this was not a retaliatory action against Japan's joining in the Western bloc's economic sanctions. Although it cannot be considered as a countermeasure



against Japan's sanctions, it is considered that, in an overall perspective, political judgment should have largely influenced the passage of the bill and the President's signature under the circumstances where there is no problem with the fishery stock as such.

The annual Japan-Russia negotiations on Japan's salmon fishing in the Russian EEZ for 2015 opened at the Fishery Agency in Moscow on May 14 amid this unprecedented anomalous development over the driftnet ban leading to its passage and signing by the President. In the first place, setting of the opening date of the negotiations on May 14 was exceptional. In previous years, this consultation had customarily started in March or early April at the latest. Japan solicited Russia to set a time table for the negotiations, time after time, but Russia did not respond. Late in April, Russia finally agreed to begin the meeting on May 14. It can be well conjectured that the Fishery Agency had been watching the course of deliberations on the salmon driftnet fishing ban bill that took place at the Parliament from March to April.

Thus the start of the Japan-Russia negotiations in Moscow over salmon fishing for 2015 was largely delayed as compared with past years. At the meeting, the Russian delegation insisted that terms of enforcement should be discussed first, instead of fishing conditions, and left the discussion to the officials of the Regulatory Division of the Fisheries Agency. As a result, discussion on the fishing conditions, including the catch quota, did not take place until May 20--one week from the start of the talks. During the initial period, the discussion centered on the change in the Russian enforcement scheme (i.e., the shift from administrative supervisors to military inspectors) which was apparently linked to Moscow's anti-corruption campaign in the Far East region.

The Russian negotiators representing the military staff (due to the change in the enforcement scheme) did not have adequate knowledge on the fishing process, fish species, and so forth, and tended to make proposals on the implementation of rules that do not fit the actual fishing situation. To this, Japan tried to explain the actual fishing situation and sought understanding as much as possible so that no obstacle may be created to the implementation of the rules. In the end, despite some

difficult issues in terms of the principle, the Russians agreed to cooperate in ways they considered feasible.

On the other hand, regarding the issues related to fishing conditions that fall under the responsibility of the Fishery Agency, such as fishing fees, the catch quota, the operation period and the number of fishing vessels, the Russian side showed no gesture to positively advance the consultations. It appeared as though the mutual understanding that has been built over the years by officials in charge of both countries on a working level has utterly collapsed. The chief negotiator from the Fishery Agency who represented the Russian delegation did not seem to have any power to make decisions in the negotiations. He tried to avoid specific discussions--which resulted in talking at cross-purposes. Only time passed without producing any result. On top of that, the Russian head negotiator took a vacation in the course of the meeting and did not show up at the meeting. The Director of the International Division of the Fishery Agency, who was hastily arranged as the deputy chief delegate, took his place.

The meeting got into motion in the week of June 8--one month after the start of the meeting--when Russia made a new proposal on fishing conditions in response to Japan's strong request to get the meeting going. An agreement at this point would mean that the Japanese fishing vessels could start operation only from late June at the earliest. The medium-size fishing vessels (200-ton class), which make the area off the Kamchatka Peninsula as their main operation grounds, were compelled to give up this year's operation because most of salmon schools have migrated past the area.

On the other hand, the small-size Japanese fishing vessels (30-ton class), which operate mainly in the area closer to Japan, made clear their intention to operate even from late June because the fishing grounds are near, although the operation period was cut short. An agreement was struck with Russia on June 11 for small-size fishing vessels only (not including medium-size vessels) by largely reducing the catch quota and fishing fees while the operation period was largely curtailed.

As stated in the foregoing, the Japan-Russia negotiations over Japan's salmon fishing in the Russian EEZ ushered in a very severe result on the part of Japanese fishermen. Due to the large delay of the start of the fishing period because of diverse external factors, both in Japan and Russia, that were beyond the fisheries relationship, the medium-size fishing vessels had to give up their operation for this season, and the small-size fishing vessels had to accept a shorter fishing period (half of that of ordinary years). Furthermore, driftnet salmon fisheries within Russia's EEZ will be prohibited effective from January 1, 2016 as a result of the enactment of the driftnet ban law. This will mark the end of traditional salmon driftnet fisheries in the North Pacific which have been conducted from pre-war days. The Japanese government now faces the need to bring relief to the salmon driftnet fishermen and landing

communities (such as Nemuro) that will be hit hard by the Russian ban.

The difficult negotiations for this year that generated unprecedented results can be summarized as follows.

1. Political pressures within Russia had a stronger influence over dealing with domestic fisheries issues conventionally administered by a group of fishery experts at the Fishery Agency, and changed (or distorted) the national policy toward fishery stock management and the management scheme itself. For this reason, the consistency of Russia's fisheries policy was weakened, and ad-hoc measures based on political judgment came to be taken.

2. As a result, with the support of foreign conservation groups, the political propaganda promoted by fishermen in Kamchatka, and politicians who support it, suppressed the scientific view on the fishery stocks within the government, leading to the passage of a bill that incorporates views not backed by scientific evidence and data.

3. This issue, in one respect, is a domestic issue of Russia, but conservation groups intervened and succeeded in enacting the driftnet ban bill through political clout on an unscientific basis. In order not to repeat this mistake, fishing nations should solidly establish their scientific stock management for the survival of fisheries, and increase supporters for fisheries both domestically and overseas, with the aim to ensure implementation of measures to avoid unscientific interventions by conservation groups on fisheries issues.

**An outline of the result of Japan-Russia negotiations on Japan's salmon catch within Russia's EEZ for 2015**

(1) Catch volume: 1,961.75 tons (6,663 tons in 2014)

Sockeye: 503.31 tons (2,886 tons)

Chum: 1,309.48 tons (3,485.4 tons)

(2) Number of fishing vessels: 19 (small-size vessels)

(38 vessels: 20 small-size vessels and 18 medium-size vessels)

(3) Catch allocation per vessel: 103.25 tons (150 tons for 19-ton vessels; 164 tons for 29-ton type vessels)

(4) Fishing fee: Approx. 600 million yen (approx. 2 billion yen)

(5) Fishing period: June 27-July 27, 2015 (June 1-July 31, 2014)