



OPRT

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FOR CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF TUNAS

ICFA Annual Meeting

ICFA Supports Responsible Tuna Longlining and OPRT's Continued Efforts

- Voice of the world's commercial fish industries -

At the 2004 Annual Meeting of the International Coalition of Fisheries Associations (ICFA), one of the issues being discussed was the tuna longline fisheries.

The meeting, held November 22-25 in Honolulu, USA, valued not only the contribution of tuna longline fisheries to human food and well-being, but also the on-going efforts of longline fishers in ensuring responsible fishing and sustainable tuna resources.

In concluding future directions on the issue, ICFA resolved to support the initiatives and works conducted by OPRT and its members particularly for the elimination of IUU fishing, reduction of excess fishing capacity, and reduction of by-catch. In addition, ICFA also recognized the need to introduce measures to ensure responsible tuna farming particularly in the Mediterranean, and to control rapid expansion of large-scale purse seining fleets particularly in the Pacific Ocean.

In addition to tuna longlining, other issues were discussed, such as the listing of commercial marine fisheries species in CITES appendices without reasonable evidence; the urgent need for FAO guidelines on eco-labeling of marine-capture fish and fishery products; and the unsubstantiated unscientific claims toward trawling practices in high-seas.

ICFA - the International Coalition of Fisheries Association - is a non-governmental organization of national fishery groups formed in 1988 to provide a unified voice and representation of the world's commercial fish industries in international fora.

Its objective is to preserve and maintain the oceans as a major food source for people of the world. ICFA's members include fishing industry associations and organizations in Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chinese Taipei, Iceland, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Norway, New Zealand, Philippines, Russian Federation, Singapore, Thailand, United States of America and Vietnam.

ICFA Resolution

- International Tuna Longline Fishing -

Considering the importance of the tuna longline fisheries in supplying food to people and the effort of the tuna longline fisheries represented by the Organization for the Promotion of Responsible Tuna Fisheries (OPRT) in ensuring sustainable tuna resources and in promoting responsible fisheries;

ICFA resolved to:

- Support the continued efforts of the OPRT and its members initiative in conservation and management of tuna resources, particularly the effort to eliminate illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) tuna fishing activities, to reduce excess fishing capacity, and to reduce bycatch by tuna longline fisheries;
- Recognize the necessity of establishing responsible tuna farming practices, particularly in the Mediterranean;
- Recognize the need to introduce measures to ensure the sustainable management of tuna resources, particularly in the Pacific Ocean, including measures to address the growth of large fleets of large-scale tuna purse seine vessels;
- Oppose any emotional and irrational campaign against tuna longline fisheries that disregard the social and economic contributions of tuna longline fisheries; and
- Support the efforts by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Regional Fishery Management Organizations to ensure the compatibility of sea turtle conservation and fishery sustainability.

OPRT Activities

Tuna statistic course organized for IOTC members

From November 15 to December 14, 2004, the Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation (OFCF), in collaboration with the National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries (NRIFSF), organized a training course on Fisheries Resource Management for three participants, one each from Iran, India and Mauritius. The course is part of the collaborative initiatives by OFCF and the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) to improve statistical systems for tunas in the coastal IOTC member countries; and during the one-month period, the trainees were trained on various aspects of Japanese fisheries, including data collection and utilization for sustainable fisheries resource management with a special focus on tuna fisheries.

During the course, Mr. Yuichiro Harada, OPRT Managing Director, gave a lecture under the topic of management of

tuna fisheries, and the activities of OPRT in promotion of responsible tuna fisheries. The emphasis was given that the effective management for highly migratory species like tuna requires international cooperation; and that there are several regional organizations such as IATTC, ICCAT, CCSBT, IOTC and WCPFC working toward this direction. Harada stressed the importance of full understanding and cooperation from all tuna stakeholders, covering from fishers to traders, processors and consumers, in ensuring sustainability of tuna resources. He also expressed appreciation for IOTC's effort in 2003 in restricting the increase of fishing capacity of its member countries, particularly those having more than 50 vessels registered under the IOTC positive list. This initiative is strongly in line with the FAO International Plan of Action for the Management of Fishing Capacity, which is also one of the OPRT's priority goals.

During the course, the real hands-on (rather to be called mouth-on) session - the tasting of sashimi and sushi tuna - was arranged. At the sushi restaurant, trainees were served with tuna menus of various species, parts and ways of cooking. Although some of the trainees had experienced the Japanese traditional dishes before, they were all impressed with these unique traditional fish eating cultures, and enjoyed all the tasty dishes. "Tuna resources are important marine resources of the world, and it is necessary to ensure sustainable use of the resources through international management cooperation," they all concluded.



Responsible tuna fisheries promoted by fish retailers

OPRT, in collaboration with its members - the All Japan Fish Retailers Union and the National Liaison Committee of Consumers Organizations of Japan -, is now promoting the campaign on consumption of 'natural frozen tuna' for Japanese public through over 15,000 fish retail shops throughout Japan. Together with the promotion, sets of pamphlets with information on OPRT activities, Q&A about tuna, and natural tuna recipes were given to consumers. Through this, consumers would learn how tunas are caught, and OPRT's efforts in ensuring sustainable tuna resources.

The campaign started on December 2, 2004, for the duration of one month. It is expected that through the campaign and the given information, Japanese fish retailers and consumers would enhance their awareness on

the importance of the effort to conserve and manage tuna resources through responsible tuna fisheries.



Special Report

Japanese fisheries ... and the lesson learned

By Nualanong Tongdee

Tokyo, Japan – *Is it possible for people to really understand the deeply-rooted Japanese heritage in traditional fish-eating culture within a short while? For people with different historical background, probably not that easy. But given a chance to be here and there and visit many Japanese fisheries institutions and people, I started to have a glimpse of how important these vulnerable but renewable resources meant not only for the people here in Japan, but probably all over the world.*

Among the 192 independent states of the world, Japan is probably among countries with the most unique and longest tradition in utilizing marine resources. Surrounded by the sea on all sides, fisheries have been prospering here from olden times. Japan's fisheries production reached its peak of 12.8 million tons in 1982, accounting for approximately 6% of the world's total, and constituted for 80% of the domestic consumption. However; shortly after, due to the increasing world's fishing efforts, the drastic decline in fishery resources, and the establishment of exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of the world's coastal states; the Japanese fisheries production has been declining; and Japan has become even more dependent on imported fish.

From past to present, more than half of the Japanese fish-based food came from off-shore and far sea areas. There are several fisheries issues for a country like Japan with a long history; and, all come to one single conclusion of how to achieve sustainable utilization of fishery resources, ensuring them to benefit the generations to come the way they did or are doing now.



weighing frozen tunas at fish market

Japan and sustaining of tuna industry

The traditional well-recognized fish-eating custom – sushi and sashimi – makes Japan become the largest tuna consumer of the world. In 2000, the world total tuna production reached 1.9 million tons; of which one-third were targeted at the Japanese market. These figures probably give a clue to understanding the importance of tuna fisheries for Japan.

Several management organizations have been established for major tuna fishing grounds all over the world, and the maximum sustainable yields have been set for tuna stocks. As the world's top tuna market, Japan recognized its responsibility to exert utmost effort in ensuring sustainable utilization of tuna, and therefore enacted the Tuna Management Act in 1996. In view of Japan's historically unique position in the world's tuna fisheries and consumption, the Act aims to 'contribute

to the sustainable development of tuna fisheries and the stable of tuna products, through implementing measures necessary to promote the conservation and management of tuna stocks in order to cope with the recent conditions and trends of tuna stocks, the development of international cooperation for the conservation and management of tuna stocks and the rapid change of the environment relating to tuna fisheries'.

In 2001 Japan supported the establishment of the Organization for the Promotion of Responsible Tuna Fisheries (OPRT), which now has, as its members, over 90% of large tuna longline vessels in the world. Over the past three years, OPRT has been focusing activities on the elimination of the IUU/FOC vessels and the reduction of excess fishing capacity (for tuna longline). It has also been coping with other concerns e.g. by-catch in tuna longlining, the need of controlling measures for tuna purse seine



Auction section for frozen tunas at Tsukiji

operation, and the rapid expansion of tuna farming particularly in the Mediterranean area. The approach to eliminate IUU/FOC vessels through implementation of the positive list scheme (first introduced by ICCAT in 2002) has been strongly supported by OPRT, and proves to be highly successful as it prevents trading of tunas from these vessels in the international market including Japan.

However, despite all the above mentioned efforts, some species such as Atlantic bluefin tuna and Southern bluefin tuna still require strict catch limitation. This presents a big challenge to many countries, particularly Japan, to find the way how sustainable fisheries could be achieved.

How could sustainable fisheries be achieved?

As mentioned in the beginning, the experiences in Japanese fisheries all led to one single conclusion. But, how *could sustainable fisheries* be achieved? Considering the importance of fisheries to well-being of the humankind, Japan has been seeking the best way to sustain the utilization of these resources, and believes that the best way to do so is to use 'scientific information' and proper management. It is therefore very crucial that all fisheries management should be based on the best available scientific evidence, or put simply, it should be based on facts, not sentiment. And as many of these resources are highly migratory species, living in the trans-boundary areas, it is also necessary that activities targeting these stocks should be fully regulated under the international fisheries management scheme, thus allowing the resources to be managed effectively and sustainably.

The article was written by Ms. Nualanong Tongdee, the Information Officer of SEAFDEC, during her human resource development program in Japan which included visits to various fisheries-institutions, associations, private sectors, and exchanging views with many people.

Tsukiji – the Japanese tuna wholesale market

The largest wholesale market in Japan, Tsukiji market started its operation in 1935. Although the market is widely known as a 'fish' market, it is also an important market channel for fruits and vegetables.

Tuna, fresh and frozen from longline operations all over the world, is among various categories of marine products



traded here. Frozen tunas are landed at ports as Shimizu, Yaizu, or Misaki* , while some of the fresh ones come via Narita Airport, and transported to Tsukiji. Fish are loaded at night, checked for hygienic standard, ready for the wholesale auction as early as 5 a.m., and all sold out by not later than 10 a.m.

auction

For more information, visit www.oprt.or.jp.

* see more information from visiting Misaki port in the next issue.

Moves of International Organizations

ICCAT

ICCAT announced positive list for tuna farming

- the first step for Responsible Tuna Farming

With the rapid increasing development of Bluefin tuna farming activities especially in the Mediterranean area, the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) adopted the recommendation, in 2003, that *'the Commission shall establish and maintain the record of farming facilities authorized to operate for farming of*

bluefin tuna caught in the Convention area'--the so-called positive list scheme for Bluefin tuna farming.

Following up last year's recommendation, ICCAT announced in November 2004 the positive list of Bluefin tuna farming facilities through its website (<http://www.iccat.es/ffb.htm>). Information, including registered countries, farming facilities, owners, operators, farming locations and production capacities, was published. In response to ICCAT initiative on the issue, starting from December 22 this year, the Japanese government will implement the measure to eliminate the import of farmed Bluefin tuna not under the positive list.

It is expected that the positive listing for tuna farming would create the effective management measures that would allow responsible and sustainable development of Bluefin tuna farming, and would eventually strengthen the management scheme for sustainable utilization of Bluefin tuna as a whole.

Big-eye overfishing addressed

At the 2004 Annual Meeting of ICCAT, organized in November, 15-22 in New Orleans, USA, the overfishing and laundering of Bigeye tuna was among the hottest issues. ICCAT adopted the recommendation of a multi-year conservation and management programme for Bigeye tuna, starting from 2005 to 2008.

The measures recommended are: 1) the restriction of fishing capacity for vessel larger than 24 meter LOA (*see the box*); 2) the limitation of total allowable catch not to exceed 90,000 tons for each of the four year period; and 3) the closure of purse seiners and baitboats for one-month (1-30 November of each year) in the Gulf of Guinea in order to protect the Bigeye stock, particularly juvenile fish.

In addition, the ICCAT Compliance Committee reviewed the status of implementation of management measures by countries, and the case of tuna laundering by fishing vessels from Chinese Taipei was discussed. If Chinese Taipei could not rectify the situation by next year, trade sanction would be imposed.

The current sanctions against Equatorial Guinea, Cambodia and Sierra Leone were lifted, while those against Bolivia and Georgia are continued.

ICCAT recommendation on number of Bigeye vessels

- Limiting number of fishing vessels to the average number of vessels having fished Bigeye tuna in the Convention area in 1991 and 1992
- Limiting number of fishing vessels of the following countries:

Country	2004	2005-2008
China	60LL	45LL
Philippines	5LL	8LL
Chinese Taipei	125LL	98LL
Panama	3PS	3PS

LL: Longline vessels; PS: Purse seine vessels

FAO

Guidelines for sea turtle conservation prepared for next COFI

The FAO Technical Consultation on sea turtle conservation and interaction with fishing operations was organized from November 29 to December 2, 2004, in Bangkok, Thailand; and was participated in by representatives from 35 countries, including USA, Japan and Thailand, as well as regional fisheries management organizations and NGOs.

The consultation focused on the current status of sea turtles, the by-catch issues, and the necessary measures to be introduced. The Consultation adopted a guidelines to reduce sea turtle mortality in fishing operations, covering measures for various fishing operations.

As for longline fisheries, the use of circle hook and the equipments for releasing sea turtle by-catch are recommended. The guidelines are to be submitted to the next meeting of FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) scheduled for March 2005.

The need was also recognized to consider other aspects than fisheries such as habitat/nesting beach protection in ensuring conservation of sea turtles.

CCSBT

Positive list coverage expanded at CCSBT11

At the 11th Annual Meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) held in Pusan, Korea, from October 19 to 22, 2004, a resolution was adopted to revise and expand the coverage of the positive list, which currently covers only the fishing vessels over 24 meters in length, to all the fishing vessels.

Total Allowable Catch (TAC) agreed was as follows:

a) Members

It was agreed that TAC for the 2004/2005 fishing season be kept at the the same level as for the previous year as follows:

TAC: 14,030t
 Japan: 6,065t ; Australia: 5,265t; New Zealand: 420t;
 Korea: 1,140t; Taiwan*: 1,140t.
 (*Member of the CCSBT's Expanded Commission)

b) Cooperating non-members

The following maximum catches were set for the cooperating non-members and countries expected to join the above framework.

The Philippines: 50t ; South Africa: 30t; Indonesia: 800t

Views from tuna longliners

Despite all the efforts of tuna management organizations and fishers to ensure responsible and sustainable tuna fisheries, there is still a claim that longlining is not 'green' enough! Let's hear their view, and what our longliners said.

'Catching with longline is responsible for the death of millions of fish, dolphins and birds in the Pacific Ocean every year' was the recent claim, and even 'whales and dolphins are caught unintentionally by the lines'. The claims are not substantiated and not true! Many international/regional organizations, including the recently established WCPFC with its work focused on the Pacific Ocean, promote optimum utilization of tuna resources based on scientific advice, but their efforts are intentionally ignored.

Following are some of the facts, which deny the above claims:

1. Longline fishing has been widely recognized as one of the environmentally-friendly fishing methods due to its low catching efficiency, and selectivity for mature tuna, thus allowing the young ones to grow, breed and increase their population.
2. As tunas are highly migratory species and are caught in the high sea areas all over the world, management of the resources is required; and tunas are now effectively managed by each tuna fisheries management organization. As early as the 1950s, to ensure conservation and management of tuna resources, regional tuna management organizations were established one by one for the entire oceans. Tuna stock conditions are regularly monitored by scientists, and used as a basis for conservation and management measures to be introduced such as restriction of fishing capacity and total allowable catch. As one of the examples of reduction of fishing capacity, Japan scrapped 132 large-scale longline vessels, accounting for 20% of the country's total, in 1999; while other major tuna fishing countries agreed not to increase their fishing capacity. And with the recent approaches in establishment of positive lists for tuna longline vessels and bluefin tuna farming, the illegal and irresponsible operations targeting tuna are now forced to stop their operations, resulting in more and more effective management scheme.

Longlining is one of environmentally-friendly fishing methods.

3. The concern on incidental catch of marine species by fishing activities has been addressed at various international fisheries fora including FAO, where the International Plans of Action on the reduction of Seabirds, and Sharks were adopted in 1999. Since then, longliners' efforts were directed to reduction of by-catch in their operations. Materials were published and disseminated to encourage fishermen to minimize the by-catch; while devices were introduced to minimize by-catch of the seabirds and sea turtles. The catch of dolphins and whales by longline fishing is physically impossible, even incidentally, and such a kind of statement would never be supported by any real scientists.

To ensure that the marine resources are well conserved, the management should therefore be based upon scientific information and objective evidence; while other causes of decrease in marine life (seabirds, sea turtles etc.) such as habitat destruction and marine pollution should be carefully taken into account in order to come up with a holistic management approach.

NEW OPRT PAMPHLET

OPRT published a new pamphlet to inform the public of its current activities. (Visit the OPRT pamphlet section at <http://www.oprt.or.jp>.)



The pamphlet cover features the acronym 'OPRT' in large, bold, black letters at the top. To the right of the acronym, the text reads: 'Promotes responsible tuna fisheries to ensure the sustainable use of tuna resources.' Below this, there is a collage of images: a tuna boat at sea, a plate of sushi, and a market stall. The text 'Tsukiji Market' is overlaid on the market stall image. At the bottom left is the OPRT logo, a globe with the acronym 'OPRT' inside. To the right of the logo is a list of four goals: 'Eliminating IUU Tuna Fishing', 'Reducing Excess Fishing Capacity', 'Promoting Responsible Tuna Farming', and 'Reducing By-catch'. At the bottom center, the website address 'www.oprt.or.jp' is displayed.