



OPRT

NEWSLETTER INTERNATIONAL

CIEL BLUE Koji-machi (4F)
 3-4-3 Koji-machi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0083
 Tel: 03-6256-9138; Fax:03-6256-9139
 Website:https://www.oprt.or.jp

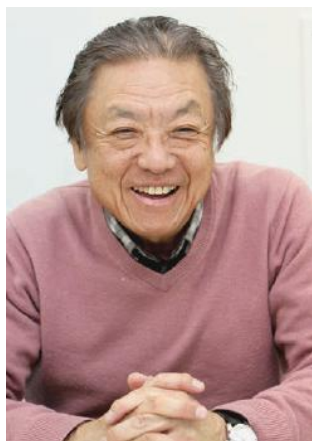
FEB. 2025 No. 88

FOR CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF TUNAS

History of "Responsible Tuna Fisheries"

Ichiro Nomura,
 International Advisor, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry
 and Fisheries, JAPAN

International rules for fishing are functioning as a matter of course. Since 1990, various international tuna fisheries rules have been established, and tuna fishing is now conducted with stable tuna resources. Mr. Ichiro Nomura has been deeply involved in the foundations of these rules. He was a former head of the Far Seas Fisheries Division of the Fisheries Agency of Japan, served as the Director of the Fisheries Department of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for 10 years, and is currently involved in international negotiations as an advisor to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. He is a legend in international fisheries negotiations and a living dictionary. We asked Mr. Nomura about the origins of tuna fisheries management in the high seas.



Interviewer: Nomura-san, you were seconded to FAO after working at the Fisheries Agency.

Mr. Nomura: Yes, in April 2000, I was seconded to FAO as Director General of the Fisheries Bureau (later renamed the Fisheries and Aquaculture Bureau) and served there for 10 years. During my time as a counselor at the Fisheries Agency, I was also involved in meetings of regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) for tuna fisheries, such as the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). The 1990s to the 2000s, when I joined FAO, were a time when the management of high seas fisheries was in the spotlight.

After the introduction of the 200-mile regime, Japan, which had found a way forward in deep sea fishing, began to feel the limits of expanding high seas operations, and this was the time when we tried to change direction and aim to maintain the deep sea tuna fisheries by walking the path to becoming a "responsible fisheries nation." In my work, while also paying attention to maintaining my country's interests, I have spent a lot of time thinking about how to construct rules for high seas fishing, in other words, creating global

rules to allow fishing to continue.

Interviewer: What was the process by which the rules for high seas fishing were established?

Mr. Nomura: In October 1995, FAO adopted the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, which called for "responsible responses" to high seas fishing operations. Looking back, this code became the basis for subsequent rule-making for high seas fishing operations.

At the time, there was concern about flag of convenience (FOC) fishing vessels, which changed their nationality for convenience and conducted disorderly fishing on the high seas. FAO focused on managing such rule-ignoring vessels while clarifying the responsibility of the flag state. As for the specific management method, taking into account the differences in management capabilities and the differences in the government ministries and agencies in charge of each country, FAO set out a method of management by a list of fishing vessels that are authorized to operate, rather than by ship registration itself. This was the Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas, adopted in November 1993 (referred to as the Reflagging Agreement or the Compliance Agreement). I was deeply involved and worked hard on both the Code of Conduct and the Reflagging Agreement from my position at the Fisheries Agency through to my position at FAO. Later, the UNIA (AGREEMENT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA OF 10 DECEMBER 1982 RELATING TO THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF STRADDLING FISH STOCKS AND HIGHLY MIGRATORY FISH STOCKS) was created as an agreement under the United Nations, which forms the basis for high seas fisheries management, and since much of the content of the Code of Conduct and the Compliance Agreement was adopted as is, it can be said that the Code of Conduct and the Compliance Agreement became the basis for the rules for high seas fisheries.

Interviewer: In the 2000s, FOC came to be called illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

Mr. Nomura: The reason the term FOC fell out of use was because people felt that villainizing FOC in fisheries, despite FOC being legally carried out on merchant ships, was wrong.

Interviewer: The OPRT was also established around that time.

Mr. Nomura: Yes. It was an organization that was established in December 2000, led by Japan, when the issue of FOC fishing vessels was in full swing. I think it was about six months after I was seconded to FAO. The organization's existence is still important today, as the spotlight is on responsible fisheries, but even back then, I think it was a very groundbreaking organization, even just from its name.

Interviewer: Nowadays, responsible fisheries are a matter of course, but I have the impression that the foundation for responsible fisheries has been built during your active career.

Mr. Nomura: In the West, the idea of forcibly eliminating evil is still at the core. In that context, the idea of including tuna fisheries management in international rules and working together with them is very Japanese in a sense, and it is significant that I was at FAO and that Japanese ideas about fisheries management were incorporated into the rules. I would be very happy if the fact that tuna resources are now in a fairly good condition is due to such efforts.

Interviewer: Was it difficult to include Taiwan and other countries in the international framework?

Mr. Nomura: From Japan's perspective, Taiwan's rapidly expanding tuna vessels were a threat. However, if we excluded them, the situation would only get worse, and we couldn't put a stop to it. That's why we changed our way of thinking and approached the issue with the policy of "Let's worry together and create rules together," so we had no hesitation in our efforts. However, it was more difficult than we had imagined to include Taiwan in a UN-related organization in the international context, so as an administrative official, I had to be prepared. But we couldn't just leave them alone.

Because I've always looked after those in a weaker position, this experience may have led to a relationship where when I talk to developing countries, people are willing to listen, saying, "If Nomura has something to say, we'll listen."

Interviewer: Even after you left FAO, you have been involved internationally in various organizations, such as serving as a council member of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC).

Mr. Nomura: After retiring from FAO, I served as a council member of the MSC from 2010 to 2016. When I was Director of the Fisheries Bureau of FAO, in addition to high seas fisheries management, I also worked on creating eco-labeling guidelines. Simply put, an eco-label is a system to prove that fishing is being done diligently in accordance with the rules. The MSC was originally an organization created in 1997 by the global

companies Unilever and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). It later became independent and provides eco-label certification based on scientific evidence. Some people have a bad image of it, equating it with extreme environmental protection organizations, but that is definitely not the case now.

Interviewer: I heard you are also a committee member of an organization called ISSF.

Mr. Nomura: The ISSF (International Seafood Sustainability Foundation) was established in 2008. Although the name does not mention tuna, it is a tuna-related organization. It was established by the US canned food industry and trading companies as a way to emphasize to the public that they are procuring tuna that has been caught with proper consideration for the resources, after the issue of dolphins getting caught in tuna purse seine fishing emerged.

Many of the members are scientists, and they value science very much. In any case, they value whether the impact on resources and the natural environment is scientifically proven, rather than emotional aspects such as trying to protect large animals or because it is cruel. I am one of the only board members from Asia. In the tuna longline industry, whether it is the MSC mentioned earlier or this ISSF, I feel that the fishery industries of Korea, China, and Taiwan are more interested in the MSC and the ISSF than the Japanese industry.

Interviewer: Nomura-san, what was it like spending 10 years of your life at FAO?

Mr. Nomura: There was a chance to return to the Fisheries Agency of Japan, but perhaps the living and working environment of FAO was well-suited to me. In fact, my life completely changed when I was assigned to FAO. Not only for me, but for my family too. I think that's why I stayed there for 10 years.

As Director-General of the Fisheries Bureau of FAO, I had always thought about how to make rules for the world's fisheries. That's what I wanted to do myself, and I think I enjoyed being able to do it as a job.

Of course, I made an effort to do that. I worked hard from 8 am to 8 pm so that I wouldn't be ridiculed for not knowing something. Even so, in Rome, it was only 30 minutes from the office to my house. I could eat meals at home normally, and I didn't have to miss the last train every day like I did in Tokyo. My private life was fulfilling and comfortable, and I often spent time with my son and family. Maybe that's why my family is still happy.

My son's life also changed when I was assigned to FAO. In his second year of junior high school, he went to Rome without knowing a thing about English, but a music teacher at an international school heard him play the violin and said, "You should definitely enroll in our school," and now he plays the violin as a member of a German orchestra. If he hadn't gone to Rome, I don't think he would have been able to choose to make a living

as a violinist.

Interviewer: Finally, how do you feel about the current situation surrounding tuna fisheries?

Mr. Nomura: I am originally from the Fisheries Agency, and even now I am involved in negotiations as an advisor to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, but I think the Fisheries Agency staff are having a hard time. They are just so busy. Also, compared to when I was at FAO, there are now many more RFMOs managing resources such as tuna, and domestic EEZ resource management has also been strengthened, so a lot of human resources are being allocated to these activities, and I get the impression that the staff are not able to handle a lot of things.

During my time at the Fisheries Agency and at FAO, Fisheries Agency staff were busy, but they had the spirit that Japan should lead FAO in rule-making. If Fisheries Agency staff continue to be unable to have that spirit, I am worried that they will not be able to take the lead in international efforts and will have to follow from behind. I know they are busy and have a hard time, but I hope Fisheries Agency staff can have the spirit of looking at the world from a global perspective and leading the world's fisheries.

OPRT Seminar : Study Session on Wild and Sashimi Tuna

" For Tuna to Appear on the Dining Table"

On October 10th, "Tuna Day," OPRT held a hybrid seminar, "Study Session on Wild and Sashimi Tuna," in Tokyo, aimed mainly at members of the National Consumer Group Liaison Committee, which is an OPRT member. The lecturer expressed his wish that "For wild and sashimi tuna to continue to appear on the dining table in the future, it is important that consumption is strong, and I would like everyone to understand tuna better."

OPRT Chairman Yuji Uozumi reported that many of the world's tuna resources have recovered to appropriate levels and are "generally being used sustainably." However, he complained that "the tuna fishing industry is becoming unhealthy" due to producers setting low prices and not matching operating costs. He cited the recent decline in demand for sashimi as the background to this.

Therefore, Chairman Uozumi said, "I want people to understand the deliciousness of wild tuna and for more people to consume a lot of tuna." He said that ensuring economic soundness will also lead to improvements in the issues of finding successors and crew members, and that "it will also be the key to maintaining the fishing industry," and called for cooperation in increasing consumption.

Furthermore, Tadatoshi Hayatake, section chief of the Fish Consumption Promotion Center of the Japan Fisheries Association, said that if people buy tuna in

pursuit of cheap prices, "they will never be able to eat fatty sashimi tuna." He expressed concern that people have a declining image of tuna because they sometimes tend to group all tuna together as one and buy "not tasty" tuna from mass retailers. While emphasizing that "price matters," he also shared information on bargains, such as the fact that bluefin and southern bluefin tuna prices are falling, and that it is a good idea to avoid the year-end sales and go to the market. He also mentioned the fun of learning about different types of tuna and comparing the different parts to recognize the differences in taste and price, and called on the participants to "support purchasing tuna so that it can continue to appear on the dining table in the future."

After the event, a tasting session was held where participants could compare naturally frozen southern bluefin tuna, bigeye tuna, and yellowfin tuna, learning about the differences in their characteristics and flavors.

Current standings of tuna RFMOs and their issues in 2025

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has subsided, many meetings of regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs), particularly technical ones, were still held in a hybrid style (both in-person and online) or online in 2024. This tendency will probably continue in 2025 as online participation saves travel time and cost although online participants must handle time difference.

The negative effects of a large amount of juvenile bigeye catch by purse seine FAD operations on long line fishing operations cannot be ignored yet. Reduction in the juvenile bigeye catch will increase the MSY level, which would enable the increase in TAC, benefiting not only long line fisheries but also all the other fisheries. Since the reduction in the juvenile bigeye catch is quite important for improvement of the long line business operation, the OPRT needs to promote it.

Several RFMOs have taken measures such as the limitation on the number of FADs that one purse seiner can deploy at one time and introduction of FAD closure periods. And new measures were adopted by the IOTC and the ICCAT in 2024. Although the IOTC has strengthened regulations, the ICCAT has changed the FAD closure timing and shortened the closed periods based on scientific advice. The OPRT will continue to monitor the effectiveness of these measures and to introduce more effective management measures such as limiting the number of FAD operations, reduction in the number of FAD to be used and introducing / expanding FAD closed fishing periods.

In recent years, in order to prevent the distribution of fishery products caught by IUU fishing, it has become necessary to improve the transparency of fishing operations, and as a means of achieving this, it has been required to expand the observer coverage and install electronic monitoring (EM) devices on board. Following the ICCAT and the IOTC in 2023, the IATTC and the WCPFC also adopted interim minimum standards for the

use of EM systems in 2024. Regarding the introduction and implementation of EM systems, it is necessary to share information among the OPRT members as a global issue.

As to fishing crew labor standards, the WCPFC established binding labor standards at the 2024 annual meeting as the first conservation and management

measures of tuna RFMOs, and will come into effect in 2028. It is necessary to pay attention to the impact of this standards on discussions in other RFMOs.

Since the bycatch of sharks, sea turtles and seabirds may undermine the continuation of long line fishing unless properly addressed, the OPRT will follow discussion at RFMOs and revise its bycatch policy, as appropriate.

As of January 31,2025

RFMO main meeting schedule in 2025

RFMO	Meeting	Dates	Venue
WCPFC	- Scientific Committee - Technical and Compliance Committee - Annual meeting	Aug.13 - 21 Sep. 24 – 30 Dec. 1 - 5	Tonga Pompeii (FSM) Vanuatu
ICCAT	- Panel 2 Intersessional Meeting (Northern temperate tuna conservation measures) - Subcommittee on Ecosystems and Bycatch Intersessional meeting - Electronic Monitoring Systems Working Group Meeting (EMS WG) - Integrated Monitoring Working Group - Bigeye Tuna Stock Assessment Meeting - Standing Committee on Research and Statistics - Compliance Committee Meeting - Annual meeting	Mar. 4 - 6 May. 12 -16 Jun. 17-20 Jun. 17-20 July.14-18 Sep. 29 - Oct.3 Nov. 15-16 Nov. 17-24	Madrid Madrid Brussels Brussels Madrid Madrid TBD TBD
IOTC	- Compliance Committee - Technical Committee on Management Procedure - Annual meeting - Technical Committee on Allocation Criteria - Scientific Committee	Apr. 7 – 9 Apr.12 Apr,13 - 17 Jul. 14 - 17 Dec. 1 - 5	Reunion Reunion Reunion Zanzibar(Tanzania) China
IATTC	- Scientific Advisory Committee - Compliance Committee Meeting - Annual meeting	May.26-June.6 TBD TBD	TBD TBD TBD
CCSBT	- Ecologically Related Species Working Group - Scientific Committee - Compliance Committee - Annual meeting	TBD Week of Aug.25 Oct. 2 - 4 Oct. 6 - 9	New Zealand Online Bali (Indonesia) Bali (Indonesia)

YouTube video distribution

OPRT has posted a new video on YouTube since November 19, 2024. The title is "Summary of Tuna Points - Sushi and Sashimi Fish Species Edition". In order to help people of Generation Z when choosing sushi and sashimi,

we have summarized the knowledge about the five main types of tuna in an easy-to-understand manner.

-Sushi and Sashimi Fish Species Edition- The main tuna species used for sushi and sashimi in Japan are the five species of bigeye tuna, bluefin tuna, southern bluefin tuna, yellowfin tuna, and albacore. All five of these species are marine fish (highly migratory fish) of the Scombridae family of the Perciformes.

We will introduce each species very briefly.

We hope that it will be of some help when choosing sushi and sashimi toppings.

Both a version that combines the five fish species into one and a version that separates them by species are available. In addition, in the "More Than Just Delicious" section, we introduce the excellent nutrients in tuna that can prevent lifestyle-related diseases and dementia.

We will continue to distribute new videos.

*The videos can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/@oprthaguro>

