

July 31, 2007

Japan Economic Research Institute
Takagi Committee for the Reform of Fisheries
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"Strategic and drastic reform of fisheries that conserve Japan's fish diet should be expedited"

Takagi Committee for the Reform of Fisheries(Recommendations)

Executive Summary

Under the basic recognition that "food is the source of life," the Japan Economic Research Institute carried out analysis and verification of the present state of fisheries in Japan, and pointed out that fisheries in Japan have fallen into a vicious circle (negative spiral) seen from the indicators from all aspects such as production, processing and consumption. The committee recognizes that the fishery resources are exhausted, causing declination of the fisheries and excess fishing, resulting in accelerated declination of the industry.

Based on the recognition above and for protecting the country's benefits and the national interests, this committee submits the four Recommendations mentioned below, with the main objectives being:

- (1) to prevent fishery resources from depletion and restore the resources.
- (2) to enrich fishermen and local communities.
- (3) to provide the nationals with safe and reliable fishery products on a sustainable basis.

Recommendation 1: Ensure full conservation of the environment and the resources and sustainable utilization based on the respect of scientific findings, and, locate it at the center of the national strategy, and promote domestic fisheries politics and diplomacy based on them.

Recommendation 2: Implement immediately the structural reform for revitalization and autonomy of fisheries in a speedy manner.

Recommendation 3: Reallocate fishery budget drastically and flexibly to achieve the structural reform of fisheries.

Recommendation 4: Build up a collaborative and mutually complementary distribution structure (total supply chain) which encompasses the range from production and end-consumption.

The Committee hopes that these Recommendations will contribute to Japan's food

security and serve as a roadmap to preserve our fish diet supported by Japan's fisheries, and also motivate all citizens to show keen concern and act individually toward the substance of the fishery crisis.

The Committee would also like to take this opportunity to strongly demand the following upon the government of Japan.

In order to implement the recognition described in the special edition of this year's Fishery White Paper "Conserving Japan's Fish Diet Culture," the government should analyze and verify the existing institutions and measures, organization and structure, and the budget, and perform scrap-and-build policy in view of the results. The analysis and verification should be done in line with the following questions:

- (1) Is there a national strategy on fisheries?
- (2) Is the crisis of Japan's fisheries recognized, which is unable to get out of the spiral of vicious circle within the global fishery trend?
- (3) Is the mission of the fisheries as an industry clearly recognized?

Recommendation 1

Ensure full conservation of the environment and the resources and sustainable utilization based on the respect of scientific findings, and, locate it at the center of the national strategy, and promote domestic fisheries politics and diplomacy based on them.

The fishery resources are in a whirlpool of global competition. In order that Japan's fisheries can contribute to country's benefits and nation's interests, a comprehensive national strategy should be established with a medium- to long-term viewpoint. However, Japan continues a resource-destructive policy, in which the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) is set exceeding the Allowable Biological Catch (ABC), and control and penalty are not sufficient, whereas the conservation of fishery resources within the 200-mile zone is essential for the sustainable maintenance and development of Japan's fisheries. With such recognition, the Committee requests the following as more specific challenges in connection with the Recommendation above.

1. Fishery resources should be located explicitly as a common property of the Japanese people, and not as bona vacantia (i.e. no one's property) in order to ensure conservation of the marine environment and effective utilization of fishery resources.
2. Ensure a full implementation of the principle of sustainable utilization of fishery resources through the respect of scientific evidence, and locate this principle as the most important pillar of fisheries administration in Japan.

Recommendation 2

Implement immediately the structural reform for revitalization and autonomy of fisheries in a speedy manner.

In the social environment that underwent drastic changes during the 60 years after World War II, it has become difficult to develop the fisheries industry and vitalize fishing communities only through adjustment among fishers. It is, therefore, necessary to

promote entry of new capital, technology, human resources and sales capability into fisheries that can build up win-win (symbiotic) relations. With this recognition, we propose: “Immediately expedite drastic strategic reform of fisheries for the revitalization and independency of fisheries.” The Committee requests the following as more specific challenges in connection with the Recommendation above.

1. The membership requirements for fisheries cooperative associations, such as the number of employees and the scale of fishing vessels, should be reviewed, and investment in, and technological transfer to, fisheries cooperative associations should be facilitated to help vitalize regional communities.
2. Concurrently, abolish basically the barriers for entry not only into fisheries but also aquaculture and set-net fisheries, making entry open generally. Steps should be introduced to enable individuals and legal entities having willingness and capability to engage in aquaculture and set-net fisheries, under the transparent rules and the same conditions as those for the fisheries cooperative associations.
3. Establish medium- and long-term strategic policy comprising, in comprehensive manners, such requirements as the reduction of fishing effort by means of the closed seasons and the reduction in the number of fishing vessels, modernization of fishing vessels and continuous construction of new vessels and support of employment of fishers.

Recommendation 3

Reallocate fishery budget drastically and flexibly to achieve the structural reform of fisheries.

For expediting drastic reform of the existing organization as mentioned in Recommendation 2, proper financial measures are required. For this purpose, the Committee proposes “drastic and flexible rearrangement of the fisheries budget for the reform of the industry.” As more specific challenges, the Committee requests the following.

1. Reallocate drastically and flexibly the public works-related budget for fishing port improvement, which has a low priority in budget implementation, into the one for promotion of new entries into fisheries and structural reform for fishing vessel-based fisheries.
2. Projects to improve sea-based and shore-based facilities should be unified, including fishing reefs, fishing grounds, fishing port wharves, and cargo handling sites,- the projects which have been implemented separately to date. Barriers which had so far separated public and non-public works, as well as prefectures and municipal governments as the project executioners, should be abolished.
3. Budget should be secured, as a matter of priority, to positively provide the Japanese national with the information regarding the environment, resources and the fishery policy, enhance the understanding and recognition of the people, and promote education on fish diet through propagation of knowledge regarding cooking techniques, sustainability and quality of seafood.

Recommendation 4

Build up a collaborative and mutually complementary distribution structure (total supply chain) which encompasses the range from production and end-consumption.

Japan's fisheries industry is not structured to be "totally optimum" with the distribution structure from production to consumption enhancing mutually supplementing and synergetic effects. While the world's fisheries industries are attempting to make fisheries valuable, "harmonized with sustainability of environment and resources," in addition to "good taste" and "safety and security," Japan's fisheries are therefore somewhat behind in this trend. With this recognition, we propose: "Establish a consistent, cooperative and mutually complementary distribution structure from production to final consumption." As more specific challenges, the Committee requests the following.

1. In order to build up a total seafood supply chain that has transparency and credibility, 'Seafood Basic Information' based on objective and scientific indicators should be introduced as the common rule for all those who are involved in fisheries, and promote sharing and public announcement of the information based on such information.

This will promote rationalization and improve the efficiency of fisheries distribution as well as the consumers' proper selection of fishery products, and also improve the appreciation of Japan's fishery products within the world market.