



4 December 2020
Anti-IUU Forum Japan

Joint Statement on the Domestic Trade of Specific Marine Animals and Plants Act¹

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is a huge threat to the sustainable use of seafood resources and marine ecosystem conservation. The realization of Target 14.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015, which aims to “effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans”² by 2020, is hindered by IUU fishing.

Given such circumstances, we would like to welcome the adoption and enactment of the Domestic Trade of Specific Marine Animals and Plants Act which took place at the National Diet of Japan today as an extremely favorable step taken by the Japanese government.

We believe that there are three points of significance regarding the enactment of the new law.

First of all, the implementation of this law allows Japan to fulfil its responsibilities as one of the world’s largest seafood importing market nations. With Japan newly introducing measures to ban the importation of seafood sourced by IUU fishing, along with the European Union (EU) and the United States (US) which already have regulations in place, a significant progress toward the global elimination of IUU fishing is expected.

Secondly, the law will benefit domestic fishermen. Illegal operation of squid fishing vessels from neighboring countries in the Sea of Japan and the increase in the amount of sea cucumbers and abalones being poached domestically are great concerns in Japan. Preventing seafood sourced illegally within or outside Japan from being traded in Japanese markets will enable the elimination of unfair competition and secure just income that is supposed to be brought to fishing operators complying with existing rules and regulations.

Thirdly, this law is important in ensuring seafood traceability as well. By mandating information sharing and transaction recordkeeping for selected species among businesses, the consumers’ trust in seafood distributed in Japanese markets, including that toward product quality, is expected to grow.

The new law is expected to be implemented in two years from now. Details of schemes under the law, such as those for species selection, are to be determined by ministerial orders that will be issued in the near future.

¹ No official English name exists yet.

² <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal14>

To date, the Anti-IUU Forum Japan has been working on awareness raising and providing information to enhance anti-IUU measures in Japan. The Forum would like to continue supporting the efforts of the Japanese government. In order to increase the effectiveness of the schemes under the law, the Forum would also like to propose the following key actions upon considering law implementation:

1. Selecting species to be covered based on fair and clear criteria

In order to eliminate the importation and market distribution of seafood sourced by IUU fishing and to prevent loopholes such as false reporting and mislabeling of caught species from being created, we believe that all species need to be ultimately covered. While however, it is unrealistic to aim for all species to be covered from the beginning, *it is necessary to ensure species especially vulnerable to IUU fishing (e.g., tunas, crabs, eels, flounders, squids and cuttlefish, in the case of imported seafood) are included, based on fair and clear criteria.*

Furthermore, *it is important to have an open process with a wide range of stakeholders including scientists and representatives of environmental organizations, as well as supply chain players such as fishermen, processors, distributors and consumers participating in the meetings that discuss covered species.* Moreover, we believe that the participation of not only the senior members of relevant organizations but also young fishermen and others bearing the future is significantly meaningful.

2. Reducing the workload of operators and enhancing traceability through electrification

It is essential to leverage information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance traceability while at the same time reducing the workload of operators under this law. For domestic seafood, *a system in which catch identification numbers and data linked to them are stored in a central database and information sharing is allowed when required, may be established through collaboration with efforts for “smart fisheries”.* Such a system could reduce workload and costs for operators keeping transaction records and for administrators checking and preventing fraud. In the long run, the utilization of compatible and extensible electronic data which enables the creation of reasonable advantages for fisheries operators and distributors may also be considered.

3. Pushing international collaboration forward

The elimination of IUU fishing—the intent of the new law—requires global collaborative efforts. In particular, *alignment with the EU and the US regarding items to be included in catch documentations that are going to be required for imported seafood needs to be discussed internationally and realized,* thereby leading to the reduction of workload for importation/exportation operators, the facilitation of trade administrative work, and the promotion of information sharing between nations for effective enforcement.

Furthermore, we expect that *Japan’s leadership among other Asia-Pacific nations to enhance collaboration for IUU fishing-related measures in the near future,* would lead to the enhancement of the sustainable use of seafood resources and marine ecosystem conservation in and around Japan.

Anti-IUU Forum Japan

The Anti-IUU Forum Japan was established in September 2017, for NGOs and companies engaged in efforts for sustainable fisheries to jointly work on measures against IUU fishing.

<p>WWF Japan</p> <p>WWF is one of the world’s largest leading conservation organizations, working in more than 100 countries and supported by 5 million supporters globally. WWF’s mission is to stop the degradation of the planet’s natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world’s biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.</p>	
<p>Seafood Legacy Co., Ltd.</p> <p>Seafood Legacy Co., Ltd. is a social venture based in Tokyo, which provides sustainable seafood consulting and platforming services to Japanese businesses and the government. Seafood is a symbol of the connections between marine ecosystems, marine economics, and regional communities, and our purpose is to ensure that it remains abundant for future generations. Seafood Legacy also strategically networks seafood businesses and NGOs to foster pre-competitive platforms to solve mutual issues faced by various stakeholders in Japan and around the world.</p>	
<p>The Nature Conservancy</p> <p>Founded in 1951, TNC is active in 79 countries and is one of the largest non-profit environmental organizations in the United States. With ‘tackling climate change’ and ‘healthy oceans, lands and water’ being its areas of priority, TNC currently operates more than 100 projects for the world’s oceans. TNC is working on the elimination of IUU fishing and the realization of sustainable fisheries through collaborative efforts with governments, NGOs, research institutes and private sectors around the world.</p>	
<p>Sailors for the Sea Japan</p> <p>Sailors for the Sea Japan was established in 2011 as an affiliate of the US based ocean conservation NGO, founded by David Rockefeller Jr., to improve ocean environment and sustainability through advocacy activities, cooperating with various stakeholders. Our actions vary to an extensive range, including issuance of “Blue Seafood Guide” to raise awareness for sustainable seafood consumption.</p>	
<p>EDF</p> <p>Environmental Defense Fund (edf.org), a leading international nonprofit organization, creates transformational solutions to the most serious environmental problems. EDF links science, economics, law and innovative private-sector partnerships.</p>	
<p>GR Japan K.K.</p> <p>GR Japan specializes in government relations and public affairs. In the field of marine environment policy, we have conducted awareness-building and advocacy activities aiming to improve the transparency and sustainability of seafood, including through the elimination of IUU fishing, in coordination with international and domestic environmental organizations.</p>	