

<NEWS RELEASE>

April 23, 2019

**IUU Fishing Working Group:**

WWF Japan  
Seafood Legacy Co., Ltd.  
Sailors for the Sea Japan  
TRAFFIC  
The Nature Conservancy  
GR Japan K. K.

**“Request (Proposal) for Legislative Schemes for Domestic Seafood Traceability and Measures to Screen Imported Seafood upon Importation”  
by Organizations Promoting Sustainable Development of Japanese Fisheries:  
Call for prompt response as countermeasures on IUU fishing**

IUU Fishing Working Group, comprising WWF Japan, Seafood Legacy Co., Ltd., Sailors for the Sea Japan, TRAFFIC, the Nature Conservancy, and GR Japan K.K., announced their “request for legislative schemes for domestic seafood traceability and measures to screen imported seafood upon importation ” as a necessary policy response to tackle illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, a pressing global problem.

IUU fishing, which circumvents and/or violates domestic and international laws, is widespread across the globe, impeding the effectiveness of sustainable fisheries resource management and creates unfair competition for compliant fishermen. It is a global problem that requires policy responses across countries. While major developed countries proactively address IUU fishing by import control and/or traceability schemes, Japan, the world’s leading seafood market nation, slips behind the other nations, and the international communities are asking for Japan to pitch in. Given the fisheries policy reform agendas within the Regulatory Reform Implementation Plan, which was approved by the Japanese Cabinet in June 2018, IUU Fishing Working Group believes that traceability schemes for domestic seafood should promptly be legislated and measures be taken to screen imported seafood products upon importation as countermeasures on IUU fishing. For more details please see the attached request (proposal).

➤ **IUU Fishing Working Group’s Website** <http://iuu-watch.jp/>

**IUU Fishing Working Group**

IUU Fishing Working Group was founded in September 2017 to facilitate collaboration among organizations and companies that work towards sustainable fisheries with a view to jointly campaigning to tackle illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

**●WWF Japan**

WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) is one of the world’s largest conservation NGOs (non-governmental organization) operating globally in over 100 nations. It was established in Switzerland in 1961 with a purpose to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature. Currently the organization focuses on conserving the world’s biological diversity, promoting sustainable use of natural resources, and preventing global warming.

**●Seafood Legacy Co., Ltd.**

With the vision to ensure seafood remains abundant for future generations, Seafood Legacy supports marine-related businesses, local governments, and NGOs in their endeavor to achieve social, economic and environmental sustainability. As a consulting firm and platform based in Japan, the company strategically connects those stakeholders and designs local solutions that are tailored to the unique Japanese business environment.

**●Sailors for the Sea Japan**

Sailors for the Sea Japan (SFSJ) leads ocean conservation as a Japanese Affiliate of the NGO founded by David Rockefeller, head of the US Rockefeller Foundation. To raise awareness of sustainable seafood consumption, SFSJ has published a sustainable seafood guide called “Blue Seafood Guide”, a rating program that introduces seafood whose wild stock is relatively abundant. The NGO collaborates across industry, academia and government.

**●TRAFFIC**

TRAFFIC is a leading NGO working globally on trade in wild animals and plants in the context of both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. It was founded in United Kingdom in 1976 as a strategic alliance of the WWF and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). To ensure that trade in wild plants and animals is not a threat to the conservation of nature, TRAFFIC’s work involves outreach and advocacy based on research and monitoring, leveraging its worldwide networks.

**●The Nature Conservancy**

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is an NGO founded in the United States in October 1951 with its mission being conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends, with non-confrontational and collaborative approach. As part of its ocean work, TNC implements programs that promote stable supply of fisheries resources through partnership with regions’ fishermen, industry, government and academia across many countries. TNC also supports regional economic development through protection of fisheries resources.

**●GR Japan K. K.**

GR Japan specializes in Japanese government relations and public affairs. The company leads policy advocacy and campaigns highlighting IUU fishing problems and solutions in collaboration with domestic and overseas NGOs with the aim to ensure seafood transparency and sustainability.

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**A Request for Legislative Schemes for Domestic Seafood Traceability and Measures to Screen Imported Seafood Upon Importation (Proposal)**

- *Regarding the Passage of the Bill Partially Amending the Fisheries Act*

The “Implementation Plan for the Regulatory Reforms”, which incorporated the fisheries policy reform proposal by the Fisheries Agency of Japan, was approved by the Cabinet in June 2018. At the Extra-Ordinary Diet Session in December 2018, the Bill Partially Amending the Fisheries Act (the Amended Fisheries Act) passed. The Amended Fisheries Act takes quantitative/output management approach to fisheries resource management based on scientific evidence, which sets Total Allowable Catches (TAC) and Individual Quotas (IQ). We strongly expect that this amendment will lead to the recovery of fisheries stock necessary for the sustainable development of Japanese fisheries, including coastal fisheries.

- *Fisheries Resource Management and IUU Fishing*

In order to successfully introduce stringent fisheries resource management envisaged in the Amended Fisheries Act, it becomes even more important to establish a system where non-compliant fisheries products do not circulate in the market and secure a market environment where compliant fishermen can compete fairly. We have pushed the government to take measures to eliminate illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing but see the greater need to introduce such policy measures from now on.

In reality, the following IUU cases have been reported within Japan despite resource management in place:

- In 2016-2017, during which the Japanese government was practically introducing quota-based management of the species, a total of over 100 tons of the bluefin tuna were either illegally caught or their catches unreported<sup>1</sup> in Japanese waters.
- With the upper limit being placed for the quantity of glass eels in farming ponds, in the 2018 fishing season, the reported quantity of glass eels introduced to farming ponds exceeded the sum of domestically captured and imported glass eels by 3.7 tons, indicating rampant unreported catches/poaching of glass eels<sup>2</sup>.

Additionally, there have been overseas IUU cases reported that could potentially impact on Japan, as follows:

- It is estimated that in 2016 Chinese vessels caught 150,000 – 250,000 tons more of the chub mackerel (*Scomber japonicus*) than the volume reported by the Chinese government to the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC)<sup>3</sup>.
- Numerous instances of illegal squid fishing operations by foreign vessels, including North Korean vessels, have recently been reported in and around Yamatotai, the Sea of Japan in the Japanese Exclusive Economic Zones<sup>4</sup>.

These cases compromise the resource management efforts, and hence, an appropriate system should be established under international cooperation to prevent such seafood products of IUU origin from circulating in the market.

- *IUU Fishing and Social Problems*

As FAO has reported previously<sup>5</sup>, those undertaking IUU fishing are often involved in related crimes. For instance, forced labor, slavery and human trafficking in South Eastern Asian countries have been reported to date. To address these issues, a number of countries have introduced measures to ensure transparency in seafood supply chains to trace the origin of products. The European Union (EU) and the United States have introduced a scheme to check the origin of seafood upon importation, and in addition, the United Kingdom and Australia have introduced a legislation called the Modern Slavery Act to increase supply chain transparency, to which seafood is also subjected. According to overseas estimates, Japan is reported to import seafood that is at-risk of modern slavery, amounting to 44% of the total volume of seafood imports, or US\$3 billion in value<sup>6</sup>. Japan should also turn its eyes to these problems.

- *Our request*

Provided the aforementioned risks in seafood supply chains, Japan should establish a proper system to prevent IUU seafood products from circulating in its market, showing its proactive commitment to eliminating IUU products as the world's third biggest seafood importing country. Specifically, import control measures (i.e. checking for genuine information regarding the origin of imported seafood products at the border/on arrival tracing back to the catch) should be taken. As with seafood products caught and landed domestically, traceability should also be ensured to obtain genuine information tracing the movements from catch to retail.

To date, the Japanese government has demonstrated its efforts such as follows:

- In late 2018, it was uncovered that the Atlantic Bluefin Tuna had been illegally caught and traded in the EU by international criminal organizations, weighing 2,500 tons and amounting to 12.5 million euros in value per annum. In response to this, it was possible for the Japanese Fisheries Agency to take appropriate import control measures because of the catch certificate/documentation system in place.
- The above Cabinet decision on the fisheries policy reform stipulates that “to ensure thorough resource management, eliminate IUU fishing and increase exports, a legislative provision will be made related to catch certificates as the starting point for traceability and gradually introduce such scheme to those [seafood products] that require it most, while efforts to introduce traceability will be promoted by taking full advantage of ICT.”

Based on the said Cabinet decision and the government's recent policy to introduce a traceability scheme domestically, and importantly, to ensure fair competition for domestic fishermen, we strongly propose that the Japanese government simultaneously introduce import control measures (i.e. a system where genuine information regarding the origin of imported seafood products tracing back to the catch is confirmed at the border/on arrival) in addition to legislating a domestic traceability scheme.

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<sup>1</sup> Fisheries Agency of Japan. (2017). *On the Adherence to Resource Management Measures for Pacific Bluefin Tuna*. <http://www.jfa.maff.go.jp/j/press/kanri/attach/pdf/170310-1.pdf>: In accordance with the international agreements reached at the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), the Japanese government has committed to quota-based management of the Pacific Bluefin Tuna by setting the upper limits for the number of the tuna that can be caught each year, depending on the size/weight of the fish (with limits specified for those 30kg or larger and those below 30kg).

<sup>2</sup> Fisheries Agency of Japan. (2019). *On the Situation and Measures concerning Eels*. <http://www.jfa.maff.go.jp/j/saibai/attach/pdf/unagi-109.pdf>: In response to the sharply declining catches of glass eels, the market value of the species has skyrocketed in recent years, paving the way for domestic poaching.

<sup>3</sup> Oozeki et al. (2018). Reliable estimation of IUU fishing catch amounts in the northwestern Pacific adjacent

to the Japanese EEZ: Potential for usage of satellite remote sensing images. *Marine Policy*, 88. The Chinese has markedly increased their fishing efforts in the high sea areas of the northwestern Pacific recently, but the number of fishing boats and the amount of catch were considered likely to be underreported by China as Japanese patrol vessels have recorded numerous instances of false identification of vessels (e.g. multiple Chinese boats displaying the same name and registration number and boats displaying a different vessel name on each side of their hull).

<sup>4</sup> Fisheries Agency of Japan. (2018). *On the Response toward Foreign Vessels in Waters around Yamatotai in the Sea of Japan (2018 Fishing Season)*.

<http://www.jfa.maff.go.jp/j/kanri/torishimari/attach/pdf/torishimari2-19.pdf> In response to the increasing presence of illegal North Korean squid vessels, the Japanese government has intensified their patrolling activities around Yamatotai areas to deter those illegal foreign operations.

<sup>5</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2016). *When IUU fishing is only the tip of the iceberg*.... Blue Growth Blog (October 13, 2016). <http://www.fao.org/blogs/blue-growth-blog/when-iuu-fishing-is-only-the-tip-of-the-iceberg/en/>

<sup>6</sup> Walk Free Foundation. (2018). *The Global Slavery Index: Japan*. <https://www.globallslaveryindex.org/2018/findings/country-studies/japan/>.

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