

Poll Finds Japan Consumers Demand Sustainable Seafood

Greenpeace-Commissioned Survey Reveals Changing Attitudes in the World's Largest Seafood Market

Tokyo, 2 March 2011 – A Greenpeace Japan commissioned poll has found that most Japanese people want seafood to both be sustainably sourced and for fish species to be clearly labeled, to help them make informed choices that would protect oceans.

The poll demonstrates huge potential in Japan for ocean-friendly products, and the need for supermarkets and restaurants to create procurement policies that will allow both the seafood industry and the world's oceans to survive.

“This shift in consumer attitude clearly shows that the Japanese market is following trends we have already seen in Europe and the U.S.: consumers want sustainable seafood that will not destroy fish supplies and will leave living oceans for future generations,” said Wakao Hanaoka, Greenpeace Japan oceans campaigner.

“By working with Japan's retailers and restaurants, we will bring the Japanese public the responsible seafood they want. These results show us that Japan's consumers demand action by decision makers on all aspects of fish procurement, from ships to shelves, to ensure we all have fish and healthy oceans for the future.”

Japan is the world's largest seafood market. Globally, fish populations are in decline due to decades of destructive overfishing driven by seafood demand. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, over 80% of global fish stocks are now exploited or overfished (1).

According to the poll substantial majority – 68% – of Japanese consumers want labeling of endangered or vulnerable fish species, in order to help them make better-informed choices, while only 12% responded saying they would eat seafood regardless of its status. More than half of survey respondents said they would like to see labels on seafood products caught using sustainable methods. Less than 20% of consumers surveyed said that they would want affordable and tasty seafood, even if it was considered unsustainable. When asked about the information given to them at restaurants and supermarkets about seafood sustainability, 66% of respondents said they would like to gain more information at the consumption/purchase site, while only 32% said this information was not necessary before purchase.

“Consumers want responsible seafood and Greenpeace is working around the world to change markets, reform the fishing industry and confront at sea those who plunder our oceans of the fish the world needs,” said Cat Dorey, Greenpeace International Seafood Markets Campaigner.

“It is great to see that the Japanese public wants to take an active role in maintaining healthy fish supplies and living oceans for the future, so we will continue our work to change the Japanese market to meet the needs and desires of the public there. We hope these changes will also be reflected by the decision makers in Japan, and elsewhere, in favor of strong measures to protect the oceans.”

The survey was conducted by Survey Sampling Japan, and asked 3,000 Japanese residents about their attitudes toward seafood and oceans protection. The online survey of consumers over the age of 15 took place between 26 January and 4 February 2011, as the latest step in Greenpeace Japan’s seafood campaign, which has been conducting outreach to Japan’s 20 largest seafood-selling restaurant and supermarket chains. A detailed ranking of responses to these outreach efforts will be released in the coming months.

Greenpeace is an independent global campaigning organization, working to create a more sustainable fishing industry and a global network of marine reserves covering 40% of the world’s oceans, necessary steps to creating healthy, living oceans.

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