

The Fisheries Promotion Plan in areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake

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Two large movements for recovery have started in Japan since the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11th 2011. One focuses on the reconstruction of the traditional local fisheries peculiar to the coastal Tohoku and Sanriku regions, while the other seeks to overcome the restrictions of local tradition and move toward a more modern, global expansion. We are standing at an important crossroads on the road to recovery.

Before the disaster, Tohoku was regarded as one of the remote parts of Japan, while the fisheries of Sanriku were facing existential problems such as the aging population. In coastal regions of Japan, fishing rights are traditionally set by the community and administered not by individuals but by the village fishermen's co-operative. However, with the modernization made since the war, this traditional primary producer has waned, with financial problems in small businesses, difficulty in finding successors in the fishing industry, and other problems of an aging population. This new disaster, particularly the tsunami, has struck hard, with breadwinners lost and the fishing co-operatives themselves in danger of disintegration.

Facing these conditions, Yoshihiro Murai, governor of Miyagi Prefecture, proposed a Fisheries Promotion Zone where the fishing rights that control use of natural resources could be made available not only to fishermen's co-operatives but also to business enterprises. The aim of this Fisheries Promotion Zone was to encourage the adoption of technology, business skills and investment from outside, and to energise the economy by raising the value of products through the integration of the different stages: primary production, processing, distribution and sales. This can be seen as a new direction: massive corporate capital shaping a new processing base for marine-products, forming a hub for aiming at the world market, and a route for growth and expansion into global competition, with recovery as one of the steps on the way. In neighbouring Iwate Prefecture, the governor, Takuya Tas-so, stresses a different direction; that of promoting development of the small businesses deeply rooted in the community, with co-operatives and community organisations at the core, preserving the kind of relationships traditional in local society. This does not mean a re-creation of the old system, but an escape from the narrow restrictions that formerly endangered society, to develop new forms of co-operation and solidarity, and with fisheries as the primary production base, apply support from consumers and other supporting organisations to achieving recovery.

It is probably fair to say that a battle is under way between those who would build a large-scale complex for marine product processing aimed at success in the world market, and those who would rather preserve the values of the region's society, with local control and management, maintaining the traditional philosophy of co-operation to achieve recovery. Considering the qualitative and quantitative differences in earthquake and tsunami damage in each area, and the variety of fishing operations and lifestyles affected, it is important not to over-simplify the problem. However, in order to base our perception of the progress of the situation on a broad perspective, the "traditional" stance (regarding reconstruction and recovery) that offers to pay attention to biodiversity and conserve the local ecosystem while revisiting its own traditions, is of great importance. The attempt, and its direction, will provide important suggestions for countries, particularly the developing ones, struggling with modernization and the continuing wave of collapse in their traditional societies.

To assess the current situation an investigation was carried out from August 2nd to 5th at the Jusanhama Branch of the fisheries union in Ishinomaki¹, and at the fishermen's co-operative in Omoé in Miyako². The object of the survey was to grasp what measures had been taken toward recovery in the area, with particular reference to the local traditions. This interim report omits the details and presents the following examples as a provisional summary of the situation.

Example 1: Miyagi prefecture, Jusanhama district.

The name "Jusanhama" (literally "thirteen shores") refers to the thirteen communities spread along the coast of Op-pa Bay to the north of the mouth of the Kitagami River. The Kitagami river carries rich nutrients from the forests to the sea, feeding freshwater clams *Corbicula japonica* in the river, while in spring the salmon *Oncorhynchus masou*, and in autumn *Oncorhynchus keta*, swim up the river in large numbers. The nutrients delivered to the sea mix with the cold seawater and nourish the marine products for which Jusanhama is famous: *wakame*³, *kombu*⁴, scallops⁵, abalone, sea urchins, and others. The residents of Jusanhama see these as the gifts of nature, and employ aquaculture too, such that the *wakame* of Jusanhama is known and eaten throughout Japan. After the earthquake, the tsunami completely devastated the village, and the ripe-for-harvest *wakame* crop was ripped out by the roots. This small community of about 630 households and over 2,000 inhabitants suffered awful losses, with over 460 houses completely lost or destroyed, while most suffered severe damage, and over 300 people were killed or lost. Seigo Sato, head of the Jusanhama fisheries union, after losing his wife

¹ 宮城県漁業協同組合北上町十三浜支所, <http://goo.gl/maps/D7ORr>

² 岩手県宮古市重茂漁協, <http://goo.gl/maps/8zupe>

³ *Undaria pinnatifida*

⁴ *Laminariaceae* sp. probably *Saccharina japonica*

⁵ *Mizuhopecten yessoensis*

and grandchild, took up residence in temporary housing and began to lead the recovery. The Jusanhama Fishermen's Co-Operative *Wakame* Recovery Support System was set up in August 2011 and by May 5th 2012, with the help of 3,244 supporters, had raised 27 million yen and had started on the path to recovery. Aquaculture of *wakame*, that gift of nature, was resumed, and, through the circle of supporters, distribution expanded; another step forward on the path to recovery.

According to Mr Sato, there was once an enterprise in Miyagi prefecture in which a large marine products company proposed farming Coho salmon⁶ or *ginzake*. The company contracted to supply juveniles and to buy the grown fish, while local fishermen invested in the necessary facilities, but supplies of imported *ginzake* flooded the market, driving prices down, at which point the company pulled out. As a result, some of those who had invested in equipment were left with outstanding loans and were forced out of business. This suggests that the involvement of businesses, which may be tempted by short-term gains, can be problematic from the point of view of continuity and sustainable management of resources.

This local community maintains the ancient custom of finance known as *koh*⁷ and other systems of mutual help by which mechanisms for strictly-fair shared use of the community's coastal resources are maintained. These strictly localized systems of self-management are a matter that may well deserve further appraisal. There is an excellent example in the improvement of management in the abalone fishery. Though the fishermen of the community had a functioning sustainable management system, losses to poachers from outside began to take a serious toll on their harvest. The community united to monitor the abalone beds, ended the poaching, as well as over-fishing, and successfully stabilized the community's income from abalone.

Example 2: Iwate prefecture. The Fishermen's Co-Operative in Omoé, Miyako.

(This article will appear in the next report.)

⁶ *Oncorhynchus kisutch*

⁷ This system of finance originated in the Kamakura period (1185–1333) and became widespread during the Edo period (1603 to 1868.)