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## **Japan**

### **Agricultural Situation**

## **Japan's Fishing Industry Continues to Decline 1999**

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**Report Highlights:** On April 20, 1999, Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) released its Annual Report for Fiscal 1998 on Fisheries. The report provides details about Japan's fish catch and the declining fishing industry.

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Includes PSD changes: No  
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On April 20, 1999, Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) released its Annual Report for Fiscal 1998 on Fisheries. The report provides information about Japan's fish catch and the declining fishing industry.

Japan, once the world's largest fishery producer, has suffered a gradual decrease in fish catch in recent years. For example, the 1997 figure represented only one-fifth of Chinese production, and was less than 60 percent of the catch in 1984, Japan's peak year. Japan's fish production in 1998 was 7.4 million tons, almost the same as the previous year. Although the decline in production has slowed in recent years, stocks levels for most species within Japanese waters are medium to low, reported MAFF.

Domestic demand for seafood products is stable, and imports are increasing to cover the short-fall in supply.

The cause of the decrease in Japan's fishery production is reported to be two-fold: 1) decreasing number of fishermen in Japan's workforce, and 2) over-fishing of the fishery resources.

An annual average of only 600 high school graduates chooses fisheries as an occupation. The workforce numbered about 430,000 in 1985, but had dropped to 278,000 by 1997. This drop and the graying of the fisheries workforce have created a structural problem leading to a steady decline in fish production.

This year, Japan cut the number of tuna longline boats to 132, or 20 percent of the total in accordance with an agreement with the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), an organization working to preserve fisheries resources on a global scale. Japan cooperates in global preservation efforts of marine resources, but these efforts have not had the desired effect. The main problem is continuing negotiations on revision of fisheries pacts with China and South Korea, both of which have boats operating in seas near Japan, according to MAFF.

The annual report analyzes fishery trends regarding fish production and supply and demand of fish products under the new 200-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) fisheries regulations. Analysis includes current management conditions and stock levels of the fishery resources within the 200-mile EEZ and sustainable utilization of these resources.

According to a related editorial article in a leading Japanese newspaper, two tasks need to be quickly performed by the Government of Japan. The first is restructuring of the fisheries industry to secure stable supplies in the future. The second is speeding up negotiations and establishing cooperative relationships with neighboring nations, such as South Korea and China, to improve management of resources. The top priorities for Japan are to expand fish populations by protecting Japanese waters through strict management of resources through cooperation with neighboring nations.