

## Awareness of bluefin decline urged

### Tokyo forum looks at resource management; official defends opposition to ban on trade

By MASAMI ITO

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Atlantic bluefin tuna stocks are declining at a dangerous pace, experts and members of an international nongovernmental organization warned at a forum Tuesday in Tokyo, urging Japanese consumers to be more aware of the problem when they opt to eat sashimi and sushi.

According to organizer World Wide Fund for Nature Japan, the gathering was the first attempt to bring fishermen, government officials, NGOs and consumers together to find a way to ensure the prized resource survives.

WWF Chairman Tsunenari Tokugawa stressed that a global system is needed to ensure tuna fishing is done legally and stocks are managed properly.



**Giving the facts: Susana Sainztrapaga of the World Wide Fund for Nature speaks at a tuna fishing symposium in Tokyo on Tuesday.** KYODO PHOTO

"We would like consumers to understand more about using resources (like tuna) in a sustainable way," Tokugawa said. "We must make sure (tuna are not consumed) to a point where they are unable to reproduce."

The largest consumer of bluefin, Japan went through 43,000 tons in 2008, or some 70 percent to 80 percent of the global total traded. About half of Japan's bluefin comes from the Atlantic Ocean.

The international community has raised serious concerns about the rapid drop in Atlantic bluefin and proposed a ban on its international trade at the Convention on International Trade

in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora in Doha, Qatar. In March, 68 states, including Japan, rejected the proposal, while only 20 voted in favor.

Masanori Miyahara, a councilor of the Fisheries Agency, told the gathering Japan agrees that Atlantic bluefin must be managed properly but opposed the CITES proposal because it unfairly benefited only countries that catch their own bluefin, including the United States and European nations, instead of relying on imports.

"The Washington Convention only controls trade, so it has no effect on countries that can fish their own tuna supply," Miyahara said. "The proposal completely lacked fairness."

Japan was labeled by the international community and media as a country that bribed developing nations to get them to vote against the proposed trade ban, Miyahara said, issuing a strong denial.

"People kept saying how Japan was a bad country that doesn't listen and that its three major flaws were Toyota, whaling and tuna," he added.

"The media said we (bribed) developing countries, but that's wrong. (Those countries) were angry over the unfairness . . . because developing countries make money by selling (tuna) to countries like Japan, earning the money to buy food for their people."

Goro Matsuo, an angler from Nagasaki Prefecture, gave a presentation and expressed great concern over the rapidly decreasing number of tuna in general.

"Watching the sea for the past 14 years, I've noticed that so many of the natural resources are truly disappearing," Matsuo said. "I think we've reached the time to regulate tuna fishing not in specific areas but around the world, and promote resource management-based fisheries."

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