

**Sustainable use of marine living resources**

**What is Japan’s position on sustainable use of marine living resources?**

Japan takes the position that marine living resources should be utilized in a sustainable manner under science-based management.

**What is Japan doing for the conservation of marine environment?**

Japan is making efforts to address the issues concerning the marine environment with a holistic approach. For example, on the issue of marine plastic litter, which is negatively affecting marine ecosystems including cetaceans, Japan is tackling the issue in collaboration with other countries.

At the G20 Osaka Summit, Japan shared the “Osaka Blue Ocean Vision” with the Leaders, which aims to reduce additional pollution caused by marine plastic litter to zero by 2050. To realize the vision, Japan will support developing countries’ efforts including by extending assistance to their capacity building and infrastructure development in the area of waste management. Japan has already committed to provide training for 10,000 officials engaging in waste management all over the world by 2025. For details, please see the link below.

[\(<https://www.mofa.go.jp/ic/ge/page25e-000309.html>\)](https://www.mofa.go.jp/ic/ge/page25e-000309.html)

## **International Whaling Commission (IWC)**

### **Wasn't whaling outlawed by the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling in 1946?**

No. The International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) is an international agreement to ensure proper management of whaling. It articulates that it aims not only to “provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks” but also to “thus make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry”, and this language remains effective.

Furthermore, serious misunderstanding has proliferated by the misrepresentation of the purpose and nature of the decision made at the IWC in 1982 that set the commercial catch limit of zero for all whale species (the so-called “moratorium”) as a “ban” of whaling. The text of the Schedule to the ICRW which stipulates the moratorium requires that:

- it will be kept under review, based upon the best scientific advice;
- by 1990 at the latest, the IWC will undertake a comprehensive assessment of the effects of the moratorium; and
- consider modification of the provision and the establishment of other (i.e. other than zero) catch limits.

Unfortunately, this binding agreement has been ignored by the majority of Member States to date, not for sound environmental concerns but for political reasons.

### **Why did Japan withdraw from the IWC?**

Japan withdrew from the IWC because it has become evident that proper science-based management of whaling can no longer be expected of the IWC. Before deciding on the withdrawal, Japan had been making sincere efforts for over 30 years to bring the IWC, which was deviating from the original objectives of the ICRW, back to its mandate. The decision was not a short-sighted exit from global

management of marine resources.

The IWC has a dual mandate under the ICRW, that is, proper conservation of whale stocks and orderly development of the whaling industry. Accordingly, ever since the so-called moratorium on commercial whaling was introduced, aiming at realizing sustainable whaling, Japan has sincerely engaged in the dialogues in the IWC on the basis of scientific data collected, while actively taking part in the efforts seeking for acceptable solutions to all Member States.

However, those Member States that focus exclusively on the protection of whales, while ignoring the other stated objective of the ICRW, refused to agree to take any tangible steps towards reaching a common position that would ensure the sustainable management of whale resources.

Furthermore, the 67th meeting of the IWC in September 2018 unveiled the fact that it was not possible in the IWC even to seek the coexistence of States with different views. Consequently, Japan was led to decide its withdrawal from the IWC. For details, please see the statement by the Chief Cabinet Secretary dated 26 December, 2018. ([https://www.mofa.go.jp/ecm/fsh/page4e\\_000969.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/ecm/fsh/page4e_000969.html))

### **How will Japan engage in international cooperation regarding whaling?**

Although Japan withdrew from the ICRW, it remains committed to international cooperation for the proper management of marine living resources. For example, Japan is conducting a sighting survey in the North Pacific jointly with the IWC (IWC-POWER). In addition, Japan will conduct non-lethal research program in the Antarctic ocean and the North Pacific, and will present analyses obtained to the IWC as appropriate. Japan's contribution and future engagement was welcomed by the IWC Scientific Committee in May 2019.

In coordination with international organizations, such as through its engagement with the IWC as an observer, Japan will continue to contribute to the science-based sustainable management of whale resources.

## **Whaling activities in Japan**

### **How does Japan conduct whaling?**

Commercial whaling in Japan is conducted in a sustainable manner, targeting only those species whose abundance has been confirmed. Whaling is allowed only within Japan's territorial sea and its exclusive economic zone, and within the catch limits calculated in line with the method adopted by the IWC (RMP) to avoid negative impact on cetacean resources. For more details, please see the link below.

<http://www.jfa.maff.go.jp/e/whale/attach/pdf/index-5.pdf>

### **How were the catch quotas decided?**

Catch quotas were set, in order to strictly abide by science-based resource management, within the catch limits calculated in line with the RMP. Application of RMP will result in a catch limit that will not have harmful effect on the whale resources for a 100 year period, even if whales were harvested annually up to that catch limit.

In addition, the catch limits are below 1% of the estimated abundance of each whale species, which is extremely conservative. Please see the link below for more details.

<http://www.jfa.maff.go.jp/e/whale/attach/pdf/index-5.pdf>

### **Won't whaling in Japan lead to the depletion of whales?**

No. As catch quotas are set within the catch limit calculated in line with the RMP, Japan's whaling will not have harmful effect on the stocks targeted, namely minke, Bryde's and sei whales in the North Pacific, on a scale of 100 year period. The IWC has confirmed that certain species, including those species Japan harvests in the North Pacific are abundant enough to be utilized sustainably. Harvesting of species that are considered more vulnerable are not permitted under Japan's laws and regulations.

### **Is the IWC Scientific Committee opposed to Japan's catch quotas?**

Japan's catch limits are based on the best and latest scientific evidence shared by the IWC Scientific Committee. In calculating the catch limits, Japan has duly taken into consideration the continuous discussions made by the Scientific Committee on the status of the whale species which Japan harvests (minke whales, Bryde's whales, sei whales), including stock structure and abundance estimates.

The process has also been reviewed by prominent foreign scientists who themselves participate in the IWC Scientific Committee meetings.

### **Domestic and international support for sustainable use**

#### **How long is the history of whaling in Japan?**

Historical and archeological evidence shows that the people along the coasts of Japan have been utilizing whales for more than nine thousand years, and two thousand years ago, organized hunts of large whales were being conducted sporadically in western Japan. Whaling in Japan today inherits such historical utilization of whales.

(Source: <http://www.jfa.maff.go.jp/j/whale/pdf/140513english.pdf>)

#### **Is whaling supported in Japan?**

Opinion polls conducted in 2019 shows that about 50 to over 60 % of the respondents had a favourable view of Japan's withdrawal from the IWC to conduct whaling.

For example, in the domestic opinion survey on Japan's diplomacy conducted in March 2019, 68% of the respondents had a positive view of the decision by the government to conduct commercial whaling within Japan's territorial sea and its exclusive economic zone while maintaining cooperation with the IWC (27% of the respondents had unfavourable views).

[https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e\\_002430.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_002430.html)

### **Is Japan the only country which supports or conducts whaling?**

In the IWC, almost half of the members support the sustainable utilization of whale resources. It is against the fact to argue that Japan has been an alone and unaided advocate of whaling.

In addition, some countries and regions have long-standing culture and history of utilizing and eating whales, and whaling are conducted today by countries such as Norway and Iceland. Please see the link below for whaling quotas set by each country. (<http://www.jfa.maff.go.jp/e/whale/attach/pdf/index-5.pdf>)