

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Name: Japan to Require Catch Documents for Imports of Vulnerable Marine Species

Country: Japan

Post: Tokyo

Report Category: Fishery Products, Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards - Certification

Prepared By: Daisuke Sasatani

Approved By: Mariya Rakhovskaya

Report Highlights:

On December 4, 2020, Japan passed the Adjustment for the Domestic Distribution of Specified Marine Animals and Plants Act to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Within two years, Japan will introduce a catch documentation scheme (CDS) for IUU fishing vulnerable seafood imports, such as squid and Pacific saury. Japan Fisheries Agency will determine which species will be subject to the CDS requirements.

General Information

On December 4, 2020, the Japanese Diet passed the [Adjustment for the Domestic Distribution of Specified Marine Animals and Plants Act](#) (available in Japanese only, hereafter “the Act”). The Act is aligned with the [FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes \(CDS\)](#), the 2010 [EU Regulation to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated \(IUU\) Fishing](#), and the 2018 [U.S. Seafood Import Monitoring Program](#).

According to the Act’s Article 11, imports of marine species vulnerable to IUU fishing will need to be accompanied by (i) a certificate of legal catch issued by a foreign government or (ii) a document specified by a forthcoming Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) ordinance.

Japan will implement the Act by December 3, 2022, at the latest. Prior to implementation, MAFF’s Fisheries Agency will develop (i) the list of IUU fishing-vulnerable marine plant and animal species and (ii) the required catch documentation for these species. Domestic species will be categorized as Type I, while imported species will be categorized as Type II. According to Japanese media reports, the Type II list will initially include squid and Pacific saury. FAS/Tokyo continues to monitor relevant regulatory developments.

Background

Between September 2019 and June 2020, Japan Fisheries Agency held a series of [Catch Documentation Scheme \(CDS\) Review Committee Meetings](#) in preparation for the passage of the Act. Experts from academia, industry, non-profit organizations, and local governments discussed the CDS, seafood traceability and overseas promotion of Japanese seafood exports.

The Act mandates that the domestic fishery industry adopt a CDS and develop a traceability system. Fisheries Agency will issue catch ID numbers for legally harvested IUU fishing vulnerable species on the Type I marine animals and plants list. Fisheries will be required to share the catch ID numbers with processors and distributors, who will be required to maintain transaction records with catch ID numbers for a certain, yet to be determined, period. Fisheries Agency will develop the CDS requirements, including the Type I and Type II species lists, and the duration of mandatory record keeping. Japanese media report that domestic abalone and sea cucumber will be subject to the new requirements for Type I species. Japan will penalize imports (i.e. Type II) of IUU fishing-vulnerable marine species without appropriate documentation.

To combat IUU fishing, Japan, one of the world’s top seafood-consuming countries, already requires catch documents for imports of certain tuna species¹ and Russian crabs (see [Japan FAIRS export certificate report](#) for details). On December 8, 2018, Japan revised the Fisheries Act and introduced individual quotas within the total allowable catch for many commercial fish species ([JA9044](#)). At the same, Japan also increased the maximum fine on marine poaching (e.g., abalone, sea cucumber and glass eel) from 2 million yen (approximately \$19,000) to 30 million yen (approximately \$290,000).

¹ Since 2007, Japan has required catch documents issued by regional fisheries management organizations for imports of bluefin and Southern bluefin tuna, and statistical documents for imports of swordfish and frozen bigeye tuna.

Attachments:

No Attachments.