

## Be precise and neutral, please

The article on Japanese fisheries in the February 1994 issue of SAMUDRA has elicited the following critical reaction

The article 'Not by fish alone', which appeared in Issue No. 9 of SAMUDRA, does not explain precisely why the price of fish imported into Japan is double that prevailing in other countries. Japan imports high-quality fish such as shrimp, tuna and salmon, and hence the price is high.

Many other countries import different species of basically low-price fish. The article, however, gives the impression that in Japan, the price of every species of fish is much higher than in other countries.

The figure of 12,202,000 tonnes mentioned as the Japanese consumption refers to the weight of fish in the fresh form. However, the 2,850,000 tonnes of fish imported is the weight of value-added products like headed, gutted, salted or canned fish, fish-meal, and soon. Taking into consideration the weight in the fresh form, the latter figure should be 3,823,000 tonnes.

If the figure of 1,570,000 tonnes for fish production in the Meiji era is correct, then the production in recent years represents a sevenfold, not fourfold, increase.

The annual per capita fish consumption in 1975 was 76.4 kg, not 38.9 kg. The claim that 'by 1989 this had almost doubled to 72.1kg' is completely incorrect.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the annual per capita fish consumption in Japan remained at the level of around 70 kg.

The issue of 'oversupply' to the domestic market is not explained clearly and the term appears suddenly, with no linkage to what had been written earlier. The meaning of terms like 'ambit farming', 'nurturing' and 'round haul nets' are not

clear. We have no such technical terms nor do we use them.

The opinion that 'how we eat fish affects the world's ecosystem' is one-sided. Contrary to the statement that 'anxieties about managing and restructuring the fisheries are not widespread'; many Japanese are aware of the structural changes in Japanese fisheries.

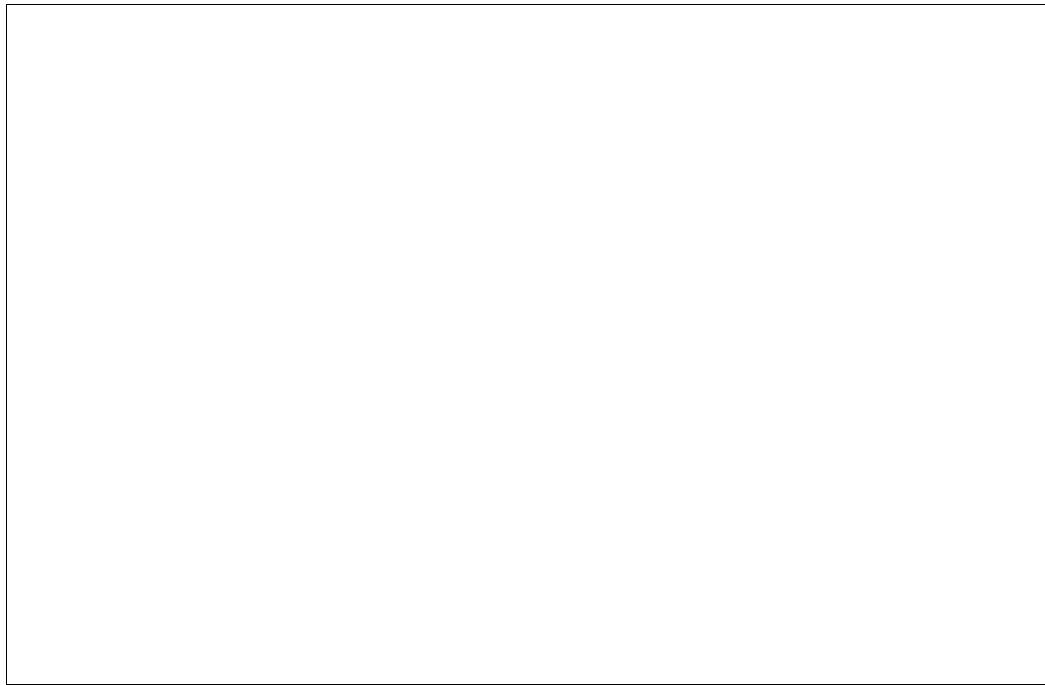
The paragraph on the first phase of growth in Japanese fisheries is not precise. During the first phase of growth, the production of fish peaked in 1936 at 4.3 million tonnes and declined towards the end of the Second World War to only 1.8 million tonnes. The total catch of all types of purse-seine fisheries in 1986 was 4.4 million tonnes, not 5.4 million tonnes. Of the total catch of pilchard, only about 10 per cent is eaten by consumers.

As for the remaining 90 per cent, half is used for fish-meal and the other half is used as feed for coastal aquaculture. Fish-meal is never used as fertilizer. The assertion that the domestic market expanded 'bringing into its grip even remote rural areas' is beautiful English, but the reader may not understand its meaning.

The sentence about discarded whale and tuna meat will lead to great misunderstanding among foreign readers. Japanese fishery has never discarded whale and tuna meat. Since its inception, Japanese whaling has never discarded whale meat.

### Two types of joint ventures

There are two types of joint ventures in Japanese fisheries. One is established with investments from both a Japanese and a foreign company. This is what should be called a real joint venture.



However, after the declaration of the 200-mile fisheries conservation zone, American companies proposed that Japanese companies buy fish on the high seas from us fishing boats. The US calls this sale a 'Joint venture' but it is not a real joint venture. Since this fact is not mentioned, the reader may get confused.

The declaration that 'Japan's coastal environment remains destroyed and unfit for the survival of shellfish' may be true for part of the coast, not for its entirety. The 1988 fishery census in Japan identified 1,339 cases of fishermen's own fisheries management organizations throughout the country. These were actually created by the initiative of fishermen themselves. In many instances, these are supported by government marine ranching schemes.

**Community-based management**

Typically, Japan is a country where a community-based coastal fisheries management system has been most well-developed.

Japanese fisheries are not trying to cope with the challenge of increasing production. Due to economic constraints, it is no use for Japan to increase its volume of fish production. What Japan is now trying to do is to increase the production of quality fish so that fishermen's income will rise, resulting in the betterment of their living conditions. 3

This response comes from Tadashi Yamamoto, president of the Japan International Fisheries Research Society, Tokyo and also Professor Emeritus of Nihon University.