

[Background Information]

Risk of Unsustainable Seafood Use for Tokyo 2020 Olympics

On December 13, 2016, The Tokyo Organizing Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games announced the Sustainable Sourcing Code for Fisheries Product.

Environmental protection and sustainable, responsible use of resources are key policies of the International Olympic Committee. The sustainable procurement of food and other items for the Olympics is an important obligation. The London 2012 Olympics took initiative and established high standards for seafood procurement policy, which were carried on in the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. The Tokyo 2020 Olympic Committee has promised to carry on this legacy host a sustainable, environmentally friendly Games.

Despite Japan's commitment to make the Tokyo 2020 Games sustainable and environmentally friendly, Tokyo's "Sustainable" Sourcing Code for Fishery Products lacks key elements of seafood sustainability, falling short of global standards for sustainable seafood. The following are some of the major issues with the Sourcing Code:

1. Lack of Traceability

The Sourcing Code does not state nor mention traceability, the key to the sustainable procurement. Without a robust and transparent system, suppliers cannot assure origins of harvested seafood, nor have a way of protecting the supply chain from IUU fishing and other questionable fisheries.

2. Eco-label Certified Products

The Sourcing Code approved MSC, MEL, AEL, or ASC certified fisheries to meet all the criteria. However, the domestic eco-label, MEL/AEL, has many evaluative standards and review criteria that are ambiguous, along with areas that do not meet international standards of sustainability. In fact, MEL currently certifies spawning Pacific bluefin tuna caught in purse seine nets. It is also unfortunate that the Sourcing Code prioritizes MEL/AEL rather than MSC/ASC under the pretext of promoting "Sustainable Japanese Seafood."

3. Non-certified products

In regards to non-certified products, the type of required documentation and data described is unclear and has no scientific validity. Also, wording such as "adequacy" is very vague and open to interpretation. The current Sourcing Code will approve any seafood, according to an interpretation.

4. Compliance with laws and regulations

To combat IUU fishing, modern day slavery issues, and other questionable practices, seafood of

unknown origin should be banned completely. The Sourcing Code should adopt all international and domestic laws and regulations, not just applicable ones. To secure this criteria, a clear system for traceability is necessary.

Unfortunately, the Sourcing Code is a major step backwards from London and Rio. It simply pushes the current fishery policy and only focuses on what easily attainable. The past two Olympics have proven that sustainable procurement is possible on large scale events like the Olympic Games and hosting cities can take this opportunity to reform the seafood industry and create a sustainable market. The Olympic Sourcing Code does not just define the quality of seafood served throughout the Games; it also plays a crucial role in defining the future of the Japanese seafood industry. We at Seafood Legacy believe that adopting sustainable seafood is the key to revitalizing the declining Japanese fisheries industry.

A handwritten signature in brown ink, reading "Wakao Hanaoka", is positioned above a solid black horizontal line.

Wakao Hanaoka CEO / Founder
Seafood Legacy. Co., Ltd.