

PRESS RELEASE

Wednesday 15th October 2008

JAPANESE SKIPJACK TUNA FISHERY ENTERS MSC ASSESSMENT

(The assessment will be carried out by independent certifier Moody Marine.)

Tokyo – The Tosakatsuo Suisan Japan pole and line skipjack tuna fishery has entered full assessment for certification under the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) standard. This is the second Japanese fishery and the first skipjack tuna fishery in the world to enter assessment. If successful, certification will allow tuna from the fishery to bear the MSC eco-label.

The Japanese distant-water pole and line fishery started in the 1950s and currently comprises 43 distant-water vessels although only 28 vessels are currently fishing. The total catch is about 60,000 to 70,000mt. The Tosakatsuo Suisan Co Ltd boats are responsible for around 7% of that catch – around 4,000 tonnes. The fishery is seasonal and, from November to May fishes in the south Pacific moving further north and east of Japan between September and October. The fishers work with a pole and line technique which produces high quality fish for market.

Mr Hiroyuki Myojin, President of Tosakatsuo Suisan, says: “For over 200 years, we have operated in Kochi’s fertile fishing ground, fishing for skipjack tuna that migrate along the Kuroshio current, using the traditional pole-and-line method, from small boats worked with a scull. Upon learning about the MSC certification process three years ago, we realized that the MSC recognized the ecological soundness of traditional fisheries like ourselves. Firm in our belief that this would be our last hope to save Japan’s proud tradition of skipjack tuna pole-and-line fishing from extinction and preserve it for generations to come, we set out to acquire MSC certification. We are now about to enter full assessment. Once we become an MSC certified fishery, we intend to acquire Chain of Custody certification as well to promote skipjack tuna harvested with the traditional pole-and-line method. We are proud of our heritage and will strive towards upholding the tradition.”

Kozo Ishii, MSC’s Programme Director for Japan say: “Skipjack tuna is an iconic fish for Japanese people and I hope that Tosakatsuo Suisan’s application for the MSC programme will lead to certified sustainable catch and use of this fishery. I expect that, if the fishery is certified, Japanese consumers’ awareness of importance of sustainable fisheries will be raised through well-known skipjack tuna products. I hope that this important decision by Tosakatsuo Suisan will bear fruit.”

Rupert Howes, Chief Executive of the MSC says: “This is a very welcome development. There is a huge and largely unfulfilled demand from seafood buyers in Europe, North America and Japan for credible, internationally recognised certified sustainable tuna supplies. The entry into full assessment of the Tosakatsuo Suisan skipjack fishery, following the successful certification of the US West Coast albacore fishery last year, demonstrates the applicability and relevance of the MSC process to assess the sustainability of migratory species like tuna. Subject to a successful determination by Tosakatsuo Suisan’s independent certifier, an exciting range of new marketing opportunities could open up for the company - both in Japan and internationally - and I wish them every success with their application. It is also tremendously encouraging to see this fishery coming forward following the successful certification of the Kyoto Danish Seine Fishery Federation snow crab and flat head flounder fisheries last month”

For more information please visit: <http://www.msc.org/track-a-fishery/in-assessment/pacific/Japan-pole-and-line-skipjack-tuna>