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EDITORIAL

# The facts on Fukushima's fish

The catastrophe at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant not only affected people directly in Fukushima Prefecture but also harmed the local economy. Sales of products from the prefecture have suffered, and tourist spots have lost business, because of rumors or misinformation about radioactive contamination.

To help increase consumers' understanding of the local situation, Iwaki City on Nov. 16 started providing radiation measurement data on its agricultural and fishery products at its website : [misemasu-iwaki.jp](http://misemasu-iwaki.jp) As its name "*Misemasu Iwaki*" (We will show Iwaki to you) implies, this is an attempt to offer accurate data promptly on the radiation levels of the city's products to consumers. It is hoped that consumers as well as retail companies will appreciate the city's efforts and help it.

The sea off Fukushima Prefecture used to be a rich fishing ground, because warm and cold ocean currents converge there. But after the nuclear crisis in March 2011, fishing in the southern sea area ground to a halt.

There is now commercial fishing on a trial basis in part of the northern sea area. Just a few kinds of fish, such as bonito and Pacific saury, which are caught by Iwaki fishermen far away from Fukushima's coast, are unloaded at local ports like Onahama. But it's a sad story. If such fish are unloaded at ports outside Fukushima Prefecture, nobody thinks twice about buying them. But if they are unloaded at ports in the prefecture and then shipped to other places for sale, they attract suspicion because they are from Fukushima Prefecture.

In May, Fukushima fisherman caught 18 tons of bonito off Hachijo Island off Tokyo and brought them to their home port, where radiation measurements confirmed that they were safe. But when the fish were shipped to Tokyo's Tsukiji wholesale market, the market did not even put them up for bidding.

People should understand that fishermen from Iwaki unload fish at local ports in Fukushima Prefecture in order to protect the livelihoods of local people who process fish. Only when fish are unloaded and processed at local ports is a true revival of the local fishing industry possible.

Local fishermen want to stop relying on compensation money from Tepco. They say that they only reaffirm their identity as fishermen by catching fish. These fishermen deserve support from consumers outside Fukushima Prefecture.

To help Iwaki's fishing industry, the AEON retailing group in June started selling bonito unloaded at Onahama port after their radiation levels are measured. AEON shows the area where the fish were caught and makes it clear that they have been shipped from Onahama. AEON says the response from consumers in the Tokyo region has been good.

Consumers should not be influenced by rumors. They should try to get accurate information and make their own judgments. Iwaki City's efforts to help consumers obtain accurate information deserve to be commended and should serve as an example for other Fukushima towns and cities to follow.



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