Protecting irreplaceable marine resources

The Maruha Nichiro Group, with its roots in the sea and 140 years of history, has continued to develop with the support of irreplaceable blessings of nature and its vital energy. With the increase in the world’s population and the economic development of emerging countries, the demand for fish-eating is expected to increase in the future. In order to meet demands and protect marine resources, we will continue to contribute to the creation of a sustainable global environment and society through our business activities.

In order to implement sustainable procurement as a ‘sustainable corporate group,’ the Maruha Nichiro Group conducted a survey on the products and raw materials of Maruha Nichiro Group companies to ascertain the current volume of seafood products handled and to evaluate the state of wild seafood products resources.

1. Ascertain the amount of seafood products currently handled

All divisions and eight directly managed plants, 31 domestic Group companies, and 17 overseas Group companies of Maruha Nichiro Corporation conducted surveys to ascertain the volume of seafood products handled for raw materials and products procured from outside the Maruha Nichiro Group between April 2019 and March 2020. The survey covered fish species name (scientific name), country of origin, fishing area (FAO fishing area), weight (in raw fish equivalent), and fishing method.

Survey results: High volume fish species handled (wild)

![Survey results: High volume fish species handled (wild)](image)

The amount of aquaculture seafood products totaled of approximately 210,000 tons with the top eight fish species, such as Whiteleg shrimp, Pacific oyster, Cofish (Pan-gusias), and Coho Salmon, accounting for 78% of the total. Compared to wild seafood products, the ratio of certified aquaculture seafood products was low, accounting for only approximately 27,000 tons or 13% of the total.

2. Assess the resource status of wild seafood products

To assess the resource status of wild seafood products, in addition to checking whether the seafood products were caught in certified fisheries, we sent the aggregated survey results to an external organization (Sustainable Fisheries Partnership). Based on the results of the assessment by FishSource*, an international marine resource evaluation database managed by the same organization, we conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the status of resources, with an emphasis on scientific perspectives.

3. Assessment of resource status based on sustainable fisheries certification

Of all “wild capture seafood products,” seafood products caught in fisheries certified as sustainable have been classified as “healthy.”

Assessment of resource status based on FishSource assessment results

“Wild capture seafood products” were assessed by FishSource, an international marine resource assessment database, for the following five scores (on a scale from zero to ten), with information obtained from stock assessment reports and from management measures adopted in the fishery, and classified into the following three categories.

Score 1. Is the management strategy precautionary?
Score 2. Do managers follow scientific advice?

The overall volume of seafood products handled by the Maruha Nichiro Group was approximately 1.76 million tons in terms of raw fish. This equates to about 0.8% of global fisheries & aquaculture seafood production in 2018. We handle approximately 360 species of fish by scientific name, and the number of countries of origin is now 76 out of 196 countries worldwide. It was found, on the other hand, that there are about 140,000 tons of seafood products whose species are unknown, mainly fishmeal, which is a feed ingredient, and clarifying this information is an important issue.

Survey results: High volume fish species handled (aquaculture)

![Survey results: High volume fish species handled (aquaculture)](image)

We handle about 1.41 million tons of wild seafood products, with the top eight fish species, including Alaska pollock, sardine, skipjack, and Pacific mackerel, accounting for 63% of the total. We also found that 59% of the 1.41 million tons, or about 820,000 tons of seafood products, were caught by fisheries certified as sustainable such as MSC. In terms of MSC certification and other certified seafood products, the highest volume is Alaska pollock, at about 550,000 metric tons, or about 67% of all wild seafood products from certified fisheries. The results showed that skipjack and scallops were the next most abundant.

Certified sustainable seafood products (aquaculture)

![Certified sustainable seafood products (aquaculture)](image)

The amount of aquaculture seafood products handled and evaluated the state of wild seafood products resources.
Score 3. Do fishers comply with managers decisions? Score 4. Is the fish stock healthy? Score 5. Will the fish stock be healthy in future?

(1) Those assessed as being healthy and no problems with the current fishing management system (when score 4 is 6 or more points and the average score of scores 1-5 is 6 or more points) are classified as “healthy.”

(2) Those assessed as not being healthy or lacking a fishing management system (when score 4 is less than 6 points or the average score of scores 1-5 is less than 6 points) are classified as “not healthy.”

(3) Those with insufficient information in the database are classified as “data deficient.”

Wild capture seafood products resource status

Stock status assessment results: “Healthy”

The results of the assessment of resource status revealed that, in addition to approximately 820,000 tons of marine products from certified fisheries assessed as “healthy,” approximately 240,000 tons of wild seafood products were also assessed as healthy, resulting in a total of approximately 1.06 million tons classified as “healthy.”

Stock status assessment results: “Not healthy”

Approximately 100,000 tons, or 7% of the total, were assessed as “not healthy.” The top three species not healthy are Pacific mackerel, Humboldt squid, and octopus. For these, due to the lack of sufficient data in national or investigative bodies, or due to the lack of information provided by us such as fishing methods, the stock status could not be assessed.

Northeast Atlantic tuna

“Data deficient”

Approximately 250,000 tons, or 18% of the total, were found to be data deficient to assess the status of stock. For these, due to the lack of sufficient data in national or investigative bodies, or due to the lack of information provided by us such as fishing methods, the stock status could not be assessed.

Handling of endangered species

As a result of this survey, it was found that some of the wild seafood products handled include fish species that fall under Category I of the Red List of Threatened Species as defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The Maruha Nichiro Group will continue to monitor trends and continue to handle fish for which there are stock recovery plans or that are caught in accordance with fishing management rules. For fish species other than these, we will consider reviewing their handling.

Future issues

Through this survey, we are aware that the strengths and challenges of the marine resources handled by the Maruha Nichiro Group have been clarified. Of the wild seafood products that were assessed as “healthy” about 820,000 tons were seafood products from fisheries that have been certified to be sustainable accounting for 59% of all wild seafood products. Recognizing that these are our strengths, in addition to continuing to monitor the status of resources in the future, we will promote the handling of seafood products from fisheries that have been certified to be sustainable. At the same time, we found out that about 100,000 tons are “not healthy” and 250,000 tons that are “data deficient.” In the future, we will investigate recovery plans for seafood products that are “not healthy” at this time, and provide support as needed. We also are aware of the need to cooperate with the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership’s research on fish species which are data deficient.

In addition, we also learned that the amount of ASC and other sustainable aquaculture certified seafood are only about 27,000 tons, and that there are about 140,000 tons of unclassified fish species that cannot be classified. It is important in the future to increase the number of sustainable seafood products and to clarify the fish species that cannot be classified. The Maruha Nichiro Group will both consider maintaining or expanding our strengths in the marine resources handled by the Group and strive to resolve the issues that have become apparent.

Sustainable Fisheries Partnership works with the seafood industry toward a world where all seafood is produced sustainably and protects marine biodiversity. We commend Maruha for the extensive work you have done to map the sources of your seafood products. With sourcing from hundreds of fisheries globally, this was no easy task but necessary to be able to assess the environmental sustainability of fish stocks using SFP’s Fish Source database.

You have created a process to collect and monitor this sourcing information that will enable Maruha to maintain and improve the sustainability of its seafood products into the future. SFP also applauds Maruha’s transparent disclosure of the summary of this assessment and encourages you to use your leverage to improve fisheries identified as not yet sustainable.

As one of the world’s largest seafood companies, you (can) could have tremendous impact and drive important changes in fisheries management and practices across the world. SFP recommends that Maruha join with existing fishery improvement efforts such as Supply Chain Roundtables and other pre-competitive collaborations – as it has done with SeaBOSS – to ensure the long-term environmental sustainability of fisheries and the health of the ocean, and aligned the UN Sustainable Development Goal 14, life under water.