

Mercury Contamination is Threatening Our Dining Table

An Investigative Report



C Elsa Nature Conservancy

2008

“Mercury Contamination is Threatening Our Dining Table”

– An Investigative Report –

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Elsa Nature Conservancy (ENC)

The Elsa Nature Conservancy was established in 1976 with the aim of global nature and environmental protection across a broad spectrum, from one's own doorstep to the sky. Elsa always looks for the blind spots of the conservation movement – things others have forgotten about – and has campaigned for the protection of animals that are going extinct unnoticed, such as the Japanese reed bunting (*Embriza yessoensis*). Furthermore, the organization was campaigning for dolphin and elephant protection before the media took up these issues. It has also continued the debate in opposition to vivisection, as well as criticism of safari parks, zoos, and aquariums. Additionally, Elsa has from the very beginning used recycled paper for its publications, and makes its own stationery and note-pads out of paper with only side used, and from computer printing scraps, in order to save as many trees as possible. Elsa's basic approach is “Each person practices nature/environment protection in whatever way is personally possible.” While the organization sets forth grand ideals, individual members carry out their own modest but diligent activities.

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<http://www.savejapandolphins.jp/> (Coalition's joint website, Japanese version)

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Introduction

This report details and discusses the results of a survey on public awareness surrounding food safety issues posed by dolphin meat contaminated with mercury. Chapter 5 of a previous report entitled "A Report on Mercury Contamination of Dolphin Meat from Drive hunts," showed how much dolphin meat is contaminated by mercury – a known toxic – at levels that exceed the provisional regulatory standard set by the Japanese government. In an interview with *The Japan Times*, Professor Shigeo Ekino of Kumamoto University has stated that "Consumption of dolphin meat should be avoided because continued consumption may have an adverse effect on the brain" and according to Tetsuya Endo, Associate Professor of Health Science University of Hokkaido, "Dolphin meat is not food."

However, such contaminated dolphin meat is still shipped to market without any restrictions or warning labels and continues to be consumed.

In 2007, meat from pilot whales (part of the dolphin family, scientifically classified as *delphinidae*) was served as school lunches in a kindergarten, and in elementary and junior high schools in Taiji town, Wakayama prefecture, which is known as a supplier of dolphin meat. Some Taiji town assembly members made an issue of this and protested strongly. Eventually, pilot whale meat was eliminated from school lunch menus in Taiji. However, the town of Taiji still continues to hunt and kill dolphins in drive hunts, and the meat, including that of pilot whales, is still shipped to markets and sold.

The annual catch quota for dolphins established by the Japanese government is 20,826 animals and every year almost 19,000 dolphins are killed, sold as food, and consumed.

Are the consumers who buy dolphin meat aware of the mercury contamination?

Are the dealers who sell dolphin meat doing so knowing how much it is contaminated with mercury?

The purpose of this survey was to answer those questions and the following report describes the results of our survey.

Chapter 1

Results of Consumer Awareness Survey Concerning Food Safety and Reliability

In order to gauge consumer awareness with regard to food safety and reliability, particularly that associated with mercury contamination of dolphin meat, we conducted a nation-wide survey among consumers, ranging in age from those in their teens to those in their seventies. Aramu Kikaku¹ Environment and Food Safety Group led the survey. Responses were received from over 100 people and the results are summarized below.

1. Consumers across a wide range of ages are concerned with food safety

As shown in the chart, consumers in a wide range of ages, from the twenties through sixties are deeply concerned about the safety of their food. More than 80% of the consumers replied that they give high priority on "safety" when purchasing food and consider "high safety level food" as high quality food.

2. Most consumers are unaware that dolphin meat can be contaminated with mercury

With regard to mercury contamination of dolphin meat, 68% of the people replied that they had no knowledge of it and 25% had heard about it but did not know the details. In other words, the result shows that more than 90% of the consumers are unaware that dolphin meat can be contaminated with mercury.

3. The majority of consumers favor the dissemination of information on mercury contamination of dolphin meat and "prohibiting the sale of dolphin meat"

Among the consumers aware of mercury contamination of dolphin meat, 84% favored "prohibiting the sale of dolphin meat" and the same number of people desired wide circulation of information concerning mercury contamination of dolphin meat.

4. Consumers do not trust stores that continue to sell foods knowing they are contaminated with mercury

Not surprisingly, consumers replied that they do not trust stores that continue to sell foods knowing they are contaminated with mercury.

¹ Aramu Kikaku: Sub-organization of the Elsa Nature Conservancy consisting of specialized groups such as publishing and environment and food safety, each supporting the activities of the Elsa Nature Conservancy.

Due to various events, frauds, adulteration incidents and safety scares regarding food, consumers are deeply concerned about the safety of their food and are increasingly sensitive.

The international situation concerning mercury contamination

In Japan, concern for mercury contamination is still low and only the effects of highly concentrated contamination such as that which led to the phenomenon coined Minamata disease is known. However, "accumulation of minute mercury in human body" is currently a major international issue. In February 2007, the Governing Council Meeting of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) discussed measures against the worsening worldwide mercury problem and held talks on forming a treaty on reduction and restriction of mercury.

Currently, the global warming issue is well known, however, the mercury problem is also internationally recognized as an important problem that concerns the survival of mankind and there are continuing efforts toward its restriction and reduction.

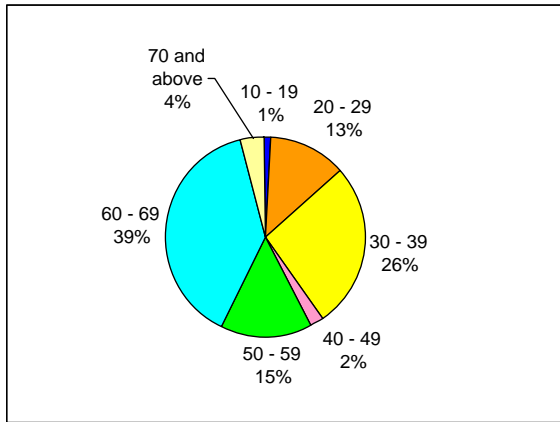
In Japan, there is a posting of information on mercury contaminated food on the web site of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, but it is apparent that this information is not being adequately conveyed to consumers. The action of the Japanese government concerning the mercury problem is also very slow. The Ministry of the Environment has finally decided to commence a survey in fiscal year 2009 on the effects of chemical materials such as dioxins and mercury on the growth and health of children. The truth is however, that regulatory measures are seriously overdue as evidenced by the fact that pilot whale meat, which shows high mercury contamination, was used in school meals in Taiji.

Results of Consumer Awareness Survey Concerning Food Safety and Reliability

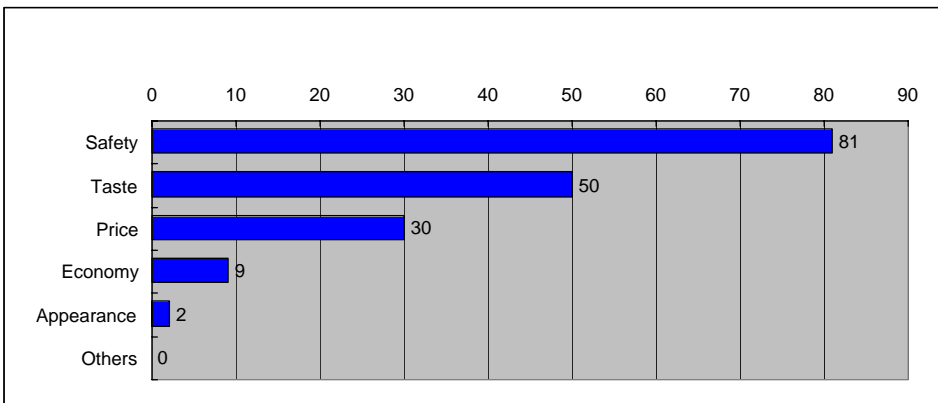
- Dolphin Meat -

By Aramu Kikaku: Horikawa,
Environment and Food Safety Group

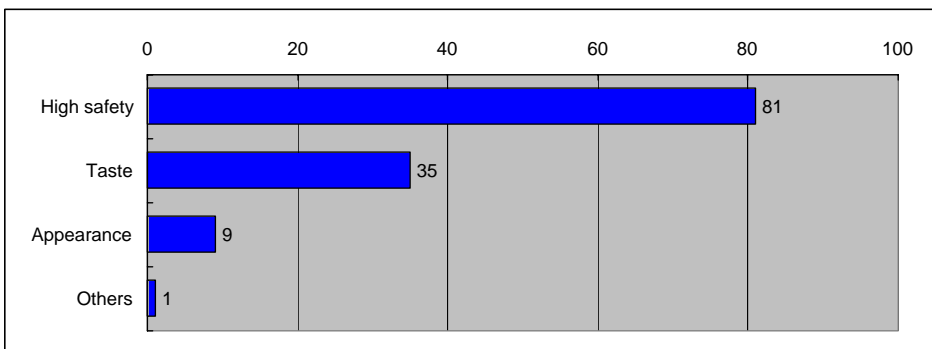
Age group distribution of respondent



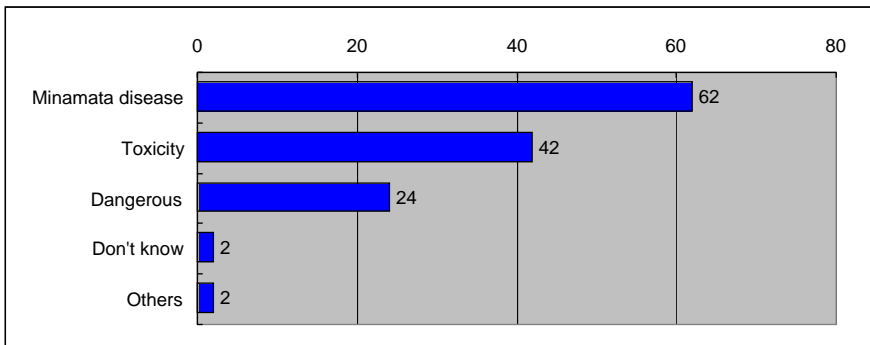
Q1. What do you consider is the most important factor when selecting foodstuff (multiple selections allowed)



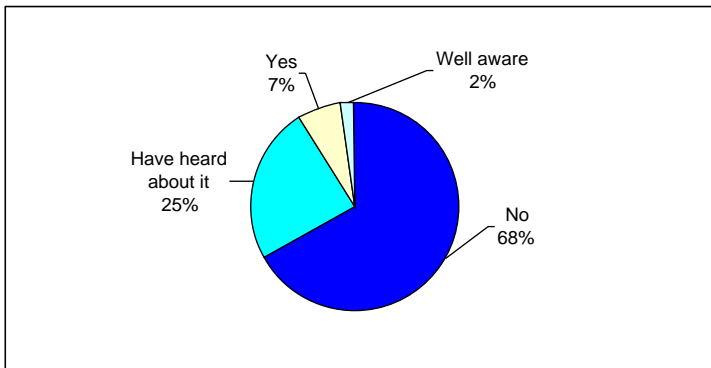
Q2. What comes to mind when you think of high quality foodstuff?



Q3. What comes to mind when you hear the words "mercury contamination?"

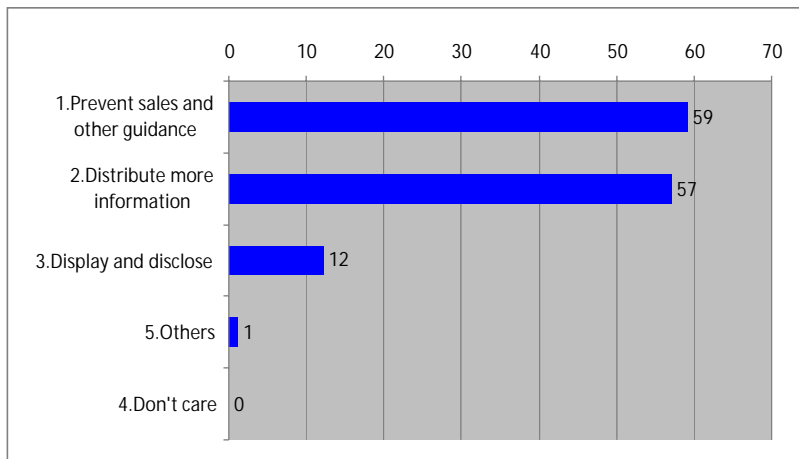


Q4. Are you aware of the mercury contamination of dolphin meat?



Q5. Dolphin meat is currently sold in stores nationwide, but what, do you think, should the government and stores do about high concentrations of mercury found in dolphin meat (striped dolphins have been found with 87 times the maximum allowance level of methyl mercury)?

1. Sales should be prohibited or guidelines should be introduced if it is highly toxic to humans.
2. Information should be more widely distributed.
3. Signs with information about mercury contamination should be placed where dolphin meat is sold so that the consumer can decide whether to buy the meat or not.
4. Don't care.
5. Others



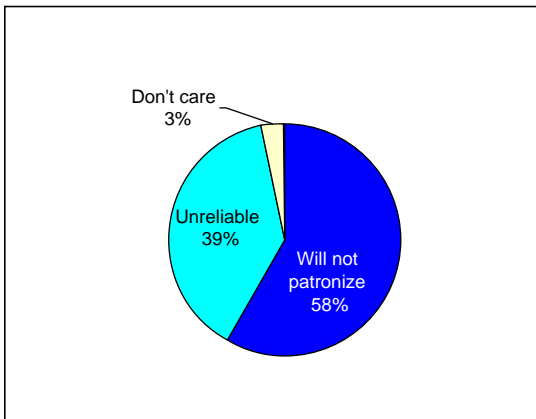
Q6. What do you think of supermarkets that sell highly contaminated foods knowing the facts about contamination?

Q7. After learning about mercury contamination of dolphin meat, some major supermarket chains have voluntarily stopped sale of dolphin meat. The Japanese government has also issued guidelines for the amount and frequency of consumption of some dolphin and whale meat (bottlenose dolphin, short-finned pilot whale, Dall's porpoise, Baird's beaked whale, sperm whale) and has issued a warning against over-consumption of the meat by pregnant women.

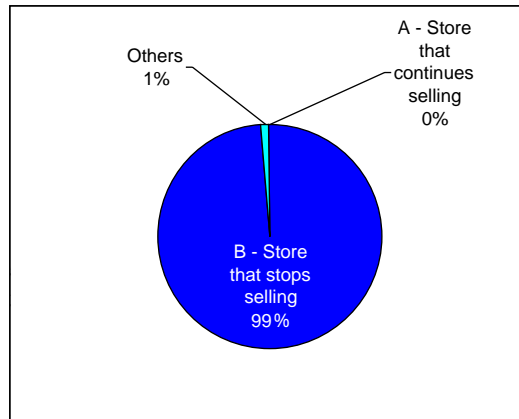
Of the following two types of stores, which would you patronize?

Store A that continues to sell contaminated dolphin meat; or

Store B that is concerned about the health of consumers and has stopped selling dolphin meat



Q6



Q7

Chapter 2

Results of Food Safety and Reliability Awareness Survey of Dolphin Meat Dealers

The survey described in Chapter 1 presented findings related to the awareness among consumers in a wide range of ages on food safety and reliability. After conducting the consumer survey we subsequently mailed the survey results to over 50 stores selling dolphin meat and asking them how they planned to respond to the demands of the consumers. Aramu Kikaku Environment and Food Safety Group also led this survey. The findings from the dealer survey, including the reactions of the dealers are described below.

Dealer reactions

1. Low response rate: Dealer confusion and protest

The response rate of the dolphin meat dealers for this survey was considerably lower compared to that of the consumers in the first survey. The dealer survey was conducted in two stages. First the survey sheet together with a statement of its purpose and reference material (summary of consumer awareness survey results) were mailed to over the 50 stores where dolphin meat was being sold. Second, each mailing was followed up by a phone call to ask each dealer to respond to the survey directly over the telephone and to send back the survey sheet. Some dealers were unreachable by telephone. Some dealers gave the response that they "cannot cooperate with a group we have never heard of" or "cannot cooperate with unauthorized survey" and a considerable number (approximately 62%) refused to respond or avoided responding by saying "the manager is not available."

On the other hand, some dealers protested saying "I have been eating dolphin meat for more than 60 years without any problem," "dolphins are harmful animals that devour fish," "dolphin meat is our livelihood and this is a vital issue," "the issue of mercury contamination is also taken up concerning fish. Inquiries of the survey are written in a one-sided view," or "we refuse to answer, because everyone sells and eats dolphin meat around here."

Nine stores (15%) returned written replies to the survey sheet rather than answering by phone.

2. Response to stop selling dolphin meat

Six dealers (10%) responded by stating that because of the information provided relating to consumers wanting the sale of dolphin meat to be prohibited, they would "stop stocking and selling dolphin meat." As a follow-up to the survey, we are investigating whether these stores have actually stopped selling dolphin meat.

In addition, five dealers replied that "we are no longer selling dolphin meat." As a follow-up, we are currently asking these stores to explain the reason why they have stopped selling dolphin meat.

Contents of responses to the survey from dolphin meat dealers

1. Intention to sell safe food

Of the dealers that responded, approximately 90% said that they strive to "sell safe food" and regard "high safety level food" as high quality food. This coincides with the results of the consumers' awareness in the first survey. In other words, this probably is a reflection of consumers' opinion.

With regard to the customers' desire that sales of dolphin meat be prohibited, 50% of the dealers replied they will take immediate action to comply. 40% of the dealers replied that they need time to satisfy consumers' requests. In other words, 90% of the dealers are highly conscious of consumers' desires.

2. Many dealers are unaware that dolphin meat can be contaminated with mercury

With regard to mercury contamination, 60% of the dealers were knowledgeable about high concentration pollution incidents such as Minamata disease, but only 30% were aware that mercury contamination is an eminent danger or that mercury is toxic.

Furthermore, only 22% realized that dolphin meat can be tainted with mercury and PCBs and more than 75% were selling dolphin meat without knowing that it could be highly contaminated.

3. Many dealers are unaware of the health warning issued by MHLW on mercury contaminated food

Only 11 percent of the dealers were aware that the Japanese government (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare) has declared that dolphin meat is tainted with mercury, exceeds the provisional regulatory standard and warns against overconsumption by

pregnant women. The remaining 89% of the dealers replied that they have no knowledge of the health warning.

4. Dolphin meat dealers cannot ignore the consumer's voices

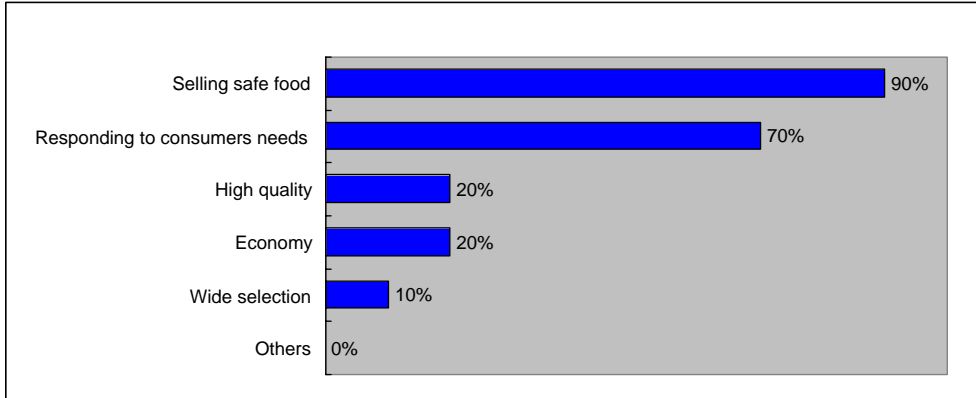
With regard to the consumers' call to "stop selling dangerous food," 56% of the dealers replied that they will "stop stocking and selling of dolphin meat" and 44% said they will "only provide information and leave the choice up to the consumer." None replied that it will "ignore the consumers' demand." Apparently, dealers cannot disregard consumers' opinions and continue in business. It is important to note that many dealers responded that they will seriously consider the fact of contamination and the voice of the consumer.

However, on the other hand, 25% of the dealers continue selling dolphin meat knowing of its mercury contamination. Consumers should keep in mind the fact that some dealers put their business as a priority over their consumers' health.

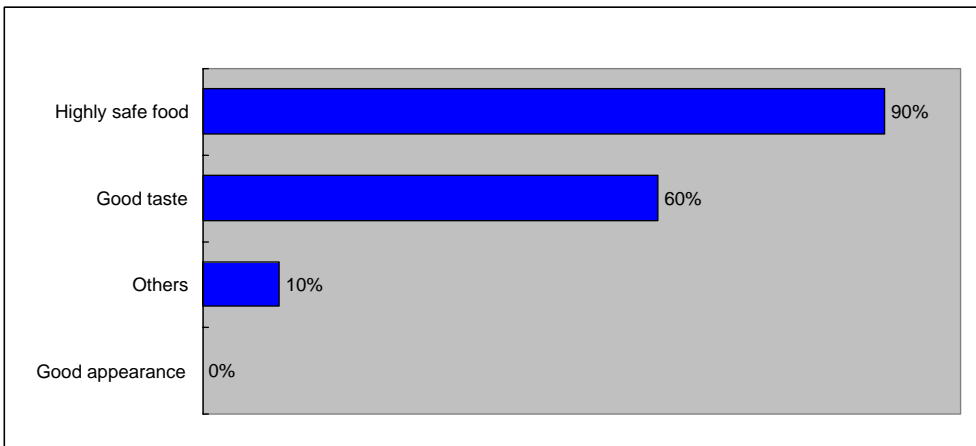
Results of Consumer Awareness Survey Concerning Food Safety and Reliability - Dolphin Meat Dealers -

By Aramu Kikaku:Horikawa, Environment and Food Safety Group

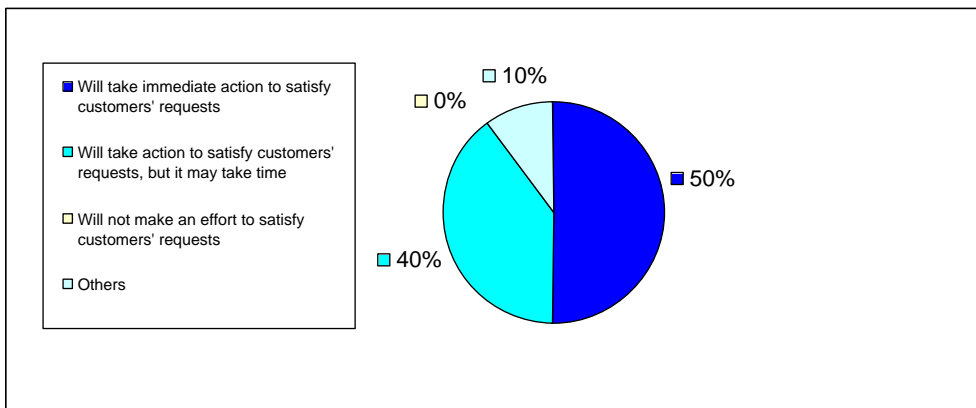
Q1. What do you consider are the most important factors about the food you are selling? (multiple answers allowed)



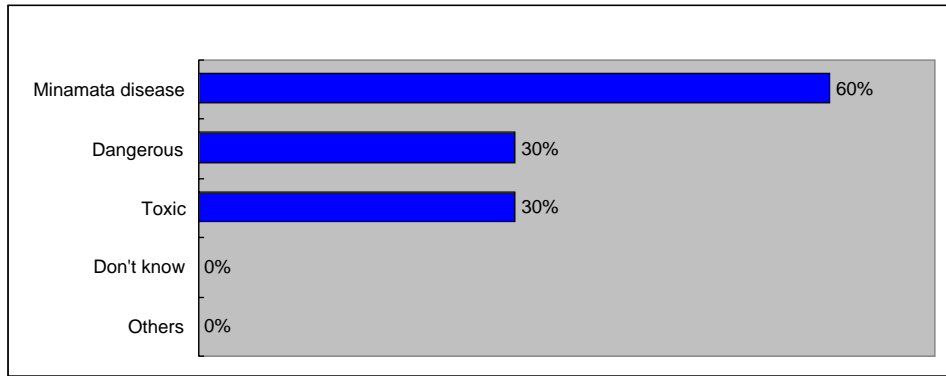
Q2. What kind of food do you consider to have high quality? (multiple answers allowed)



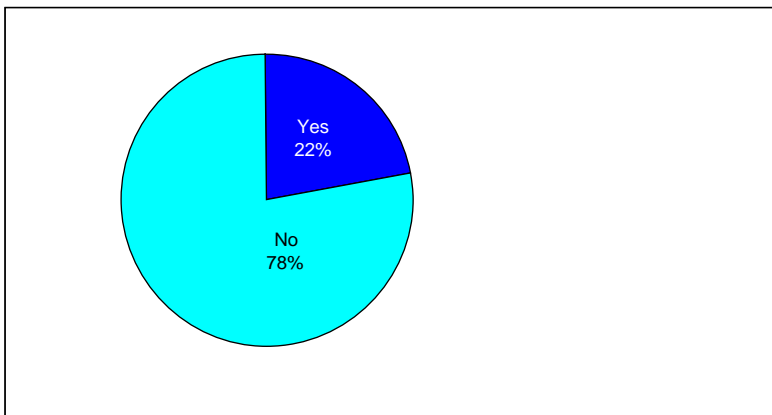
Q3. How are you responding to customers' requests that contaminated dolphin meat should not be sold?



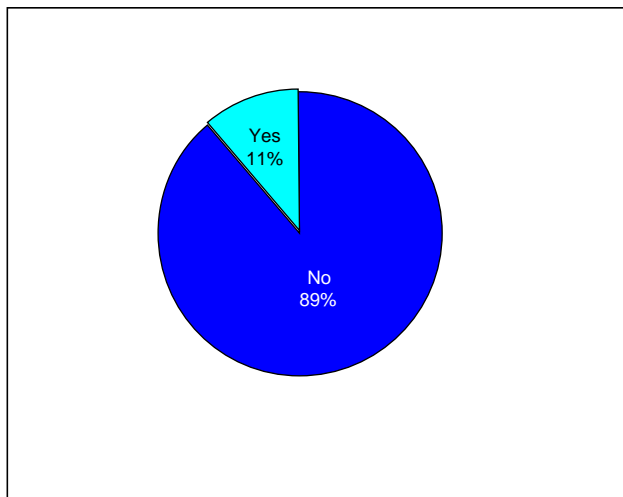
Q4. What comes to mind when you hear the words mercury contamination?



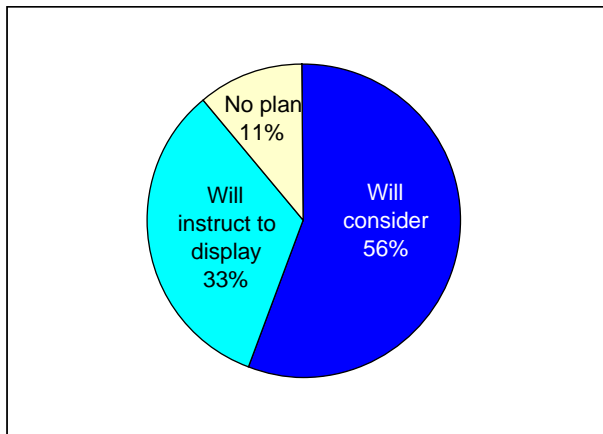
Q5. Do you know that dolphin meat can be contaminated with mercury and PCBs?



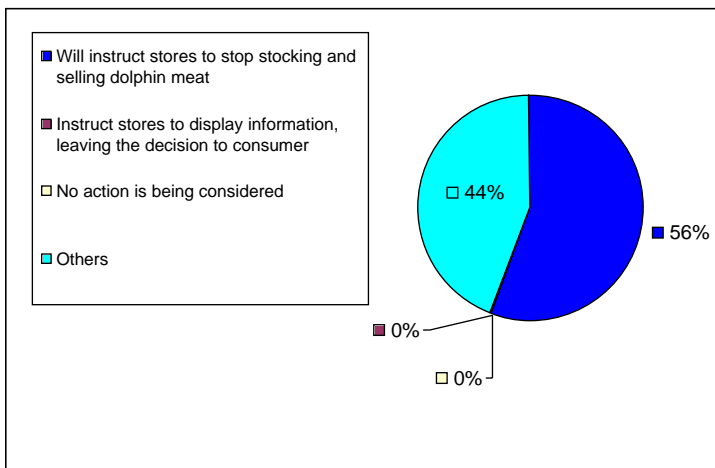
Q6. Did you know that methyl-mercury at levels that are 87 times the provisional regulatory standard established by MHLW has been detected in some striped dolphin meat and that the government has issued a warning to pregnant women not to over-consume some dolphin and whale meat?



Q7. Consumers are demanding that dealers disclose and display information concerning contaminants in food. Are you considering displaying such information on shelves of dolphin meat or of issuing such guidelines to shops selling your dolphin meat?



Q8. As shown in the enclosed reference, the majority of consumers have replied that they "cannot trust and will not patronize" dealers who knowingly sell contaminated dolphin meat and are demanding that dealers stop selling unsafe food. As the main distributor, what kind of action are you considering in light of this fact?



Other responses

* The result is inevitable with this kind of questioning.

If the goal is to protect dolphins, the survey should be conducted from different viewpoint. In addition, there should be information about whether this is true for dolphins around the world. Personally, I believe dolphins should be protected and not sold.

*We are a member of a chain of stores and cannot decide on our own.

* We will comply with the decision of head office.

Chapter 3

What Must be Done to Protect the Health of Consumers Against Mercury Contamination in Light of the Consumer and Dealer Awareness Survey

Although we chose dolphin meat, which has an extraordinary level of mercury contamination, as the subject of our awareness survey, mercury can be found in fish, soil, and even in the atmosphere. On the other hand, the amount of mercury emitted from coal fired power plants in China reached approximately 100 tons (2003) and the mercury contained in yellow wind that reaches Japan is known to adversely affect the health of people living in Japan. Mercury is also contained in instruments that Japanese people use daily such as the mercury thermometer and the fluorescent lamp. Because Japan is surrounded by ocean and fish is eaten daily, consumers must be aware of mercury contamination of foodstuff in order to protect their health regardless of whether they eat dolphin meat or not.

From our latest survey, it is evident that most dealers and consumers of dolphin meat are unaware of the serious mercury contamination of dolphin meat. In addition, it became clear from our survey that the general public has little knowledge of the serious effect of mercury on human health. In other words, the information provided on the simple web site by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare appears not sufficient to inform and warn the public about the dangers of mercury contamination.

Under these circumstances, the sale of food contaminated with mercury that exceeds the provisional regulatory standard set by the government must be stopped in order to protect the health of consumers from the effects of mercury contamination. Alternatively, each dealer should be obliged to display information about mercury contamination in the products on sale so that the consumer can decide. Without these measures, the health of the consumer cannot be protected.

In Japan cigarette packages currently display warning that cigarette smoking may be harmful to health. Similarly, the sale of food with residual agricultural chemicals that exceed certain regulatory levels is prohibited via the "positive list system." The same measure must also be taken for the effect of mercury on the human health which is comparable to the harm done by cigarettes and agricultural chemicals.

In order to protect the consumer from the dangers of mercury contamination of food products, our group has petitioned the Policy Planning and Communication Division under the Department of Food Safety Bureau of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare to take the same measures for mercury as those taken for cigarettes and agricultural chemicals. (See the petition, P.9)

The current issue of mercury contamination is regarded as a major problem by countries all over the world and there are international efforts toward its reduction and restriction. Mercury contamination which spreads through the atmosphere and the ocean has no border. A global effort is necessary. In this respect, our petition received international attention and citizen groups and environmental organizations all over the world have started sending petitions to the Japanese government in support of our activity.

Petition to the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare for Mercury Health Warnings on Foodstuffs (reference:P.9)

Petition to Warn the Japanese People of Mercury Danger

To: Policy Planning and Communication Division,
The Department of Food Safety Bureau,
The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare

E-Mail: syokucommunication@mglw.go.jp Fax: +81-3-3503-7965

To Whom It May Concern:

There is worldwide concern that mercury accumulated in the human body may pose a serious health risk, especially to pregnant women and children.

As you know, dolphin meat from drive hunts in Taiji, Wakayama prefecture, proved to be highly contaminated with toxic chemicals such as mercury, methyl mercury and PCBs. Repeated chemical analyses have shown that the level of mercury in dolphin meat is much higher than the maximum allowable level set by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare of Japan.

We understand that the role of the Department of Food Safety Bureau is to promote food safety, thereby ensuring the health of the Japanese people. We urgently request the following:

1. Prohibit the sale of dolphin meat that contains mercury exceeding the maximum allowable level set by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW). The sale of food items with toxic agricultural chemicals exceeding the maximum allowable level set by MHLW is already prohibited as a result of the "Positive-list System," which was adopted in 2006. Since mercury is as harmful to the human body as toxic agricultural chemicals, the "Positive-list System" should also apply to mercury.
2. Until the above request is put into effect, consumers must be warned of the dangers associated with consuming mercury contaminated dolphin meat, in much the same way they are being warned of the health risks associated with smoking cigarettes: Every store that sells dolphin meat must be obligated to post a prominent warning label on each meat package, stating as follows: "This food item possibly contains mercury exceeding the maximum allowable level set by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare. Mercury accumulated in the human body may harm your health."

Sincerely,

Name, Address & Country _____

Chapter 4. What is Mercury?

Mercury can be classified mainly into "metallic mercury," "inorganic mercury" and "organic mercury."

"Metallic mercury" which is used in thermometers and fluorescent lights can damage the central nervous system if it accumulates inside the human brain, but it is difficult to absorb from the skin or digestive system and its toxicity is considered low. However, it is discharged in the atmosphere as mercury vapors at room temperature. Mercury vapor is toxic and highly concentrated mercury vapor will harm respiratory and digestive systems. Dental amalgam using metallic mercury vaporizes inside the mouth and can also cause health problems.

Since mercury exists in the earth's crust like other metals, it is discharged to the environment by tectonic and volcanic activities. Most of this is "inorganic mercury." Vapor mercury discharged to the atmosphere dissolves in rain and eventually returns to the earth, oceans, and rivers. Then some of that mercury becomes mercury vapor once again, and changes to metallic mercury, or "organic mercury" (such as methyl-mercury which is the cause of Minamata disease).

Methyl-mercury which is a type of "organic mercury" is constantly created from "inorganic mercury" by certain type of microbes. Therefore, methyl-mercury accumulates in fishes. Because of the food chain whereby smaller fish are eaten by larger ones and so forth, methyl-mercury is concentrated in large fishes rather than small fishes and in deep-sea fishes. Concentration is further increased in dolphins and whales that eat fishes with high accumulations of methyl-mercury.

Continuous consumption of fish, dolphin, and whale meat with high mercury levels will result in the accumulation of methyl-mercury in the human body. In order to avoid methyl-mercury poisoning, over-consumption of fish and dolphin meat with high mercury levels must be avoided.

In Japan, a provisional regulatory standard has been established on the amount of mercury above which harm to health can occur. The limit on the total mercury level is 0.4ppm and methyl-mercury is 0.3ppm. Most dolphin and whale meat, including some fishes significantly exceed this limit and the possibility of adverse effects on health from

consuming such meat must be considered. Minamata disease was caused by people eating fish contaminated with methyl-mercury. According to Professor Shigeo Ekino of Kumamoto University, the mercury levels of some dolphins captured at the town of Taiji in Wakayama, Japan, is higher than the level of mercury in fishes that caused the Minamata disease. (Japan Times, Aug. 5, 2007)

Toxic symptoms caused by the accumulation of methyl-mercury in human body

Symptoms of methyl-mercury poisoning are mainly neurological. Although the development of the disease differs among individuals, in the case of adults, symptoms such as sensory disorder (such as numbness, not feeling when touched), visual field disorder, hearing disorder, inability to walk straight, and an inability to perform smooth movement are apparent.

Fetal exposure to methyl-mercury can cause cerebral palsy or mental defects. Since methyl-mercury passes through the placenta and accumulates in the fetus, pregnant women must be careful not to introduce methyl-mercury into their bodies. The amount of mercury in pregnant women can be determined from the level of mercury in their hair. When the level of mercury in the hair of pregnant woman reaches 10 to 20ppm, there is a 5% possibility that the fetus will have disabilities according to a 1999 World Health Organization report.

Research on the effect of low concentrations of methyl-mercury on the fetus is still in progress, but there is a strong relationship between mercury and autism. In other words, studies are showing that mercury is suspected as the cause of autism. Furthermore, Dr. Shigeo Ekino, who is well known for his research on the brain of Minamata disease patients, has revealed that even small amounts of methyl-mercury will damage neurons. (Japan Times, Aug. 5, 2007)

(See: National Institute for Minamata Disease web site and "Minamata ni Manabu Kaigai – Suigin Sakugen" by Michikazu Iseri, published by Seibundo 2008)

Chapter 5

A Report on Mercury Contamination of Dolphin Meat from the Drive Hunts

(2004 · 2006 ~ 2008)

Source

The Japan Times

Mr. junichiro Yamashita, Taiji town Councilman

Elsa Nature Conservancy

Blue Voice

A Report on Mercury Contamination of Dolphin Meat from the Drive Hunts

(2004 • 2006 ~ 2008)

The following is a list of the levels of mercury in dolphin meat from the drive hunts in Taiji, Wakayama prefecture, tested by public facilities authorized by the Japanese government. The levels reported for 2004 are from dolphin meat from the drive hunt in Futo, Shizuoka prefecture. The drive hunt in Futo has been suspended since then.

Provisional regulatory levels of mercury and PCBs set by the Japanese government:
 Mercury (T-Hg):0.4ppm, Methyl mercury (M-Hg):0.3ppm, PCBs:0.5ppm

Source:

JP=The Japan Times, ENC=Eisa Nature Conservancy, Mr.Y=Mr. Junichiro Yamashita,Taiji Town Councilman, BlueVoice

Testing facilities (Laboratory):

JIFE=Japan Institute of Foods Ecology

NSBC=Nihon Shokuhin Bunseki Center (Japan Food Research Laboratories)

PHRC=Public Health Research Center of Ibaraki Pharmaceutical Association

JFHA=Japan Foods Hygiene Association

Dr. Endo=Dr. Tetsuya Endo at Health Science University of Hokkaido

Date	Sample	A: T-Hg (ppm)	B: M-Hg (ppm)	C: PCBs (ppm)	Extent of contamination	Testing facility	Source	Notes
Nov.11, 2004	Bottlenose dolphin	19.2	-	-	48 time higher than the maximum allowance level (m.a.)	Dr. Endo	ENC	The Meat was from the drive hunt in Futo, Shizuoka prefecture in 2004.
Feb. 23,2006	Bottlenose dolphin	1.7	-	-	4 times higher than m.a.	JFHA	JT	
Dec. 22,2006	Striped dolphin	5.4	-	-	13.5times higher than m.a.	NSBC	JT	
Feb.6, 2007	Gondou (belly)	3.82	-	-	9.55 times higher than m.a.	PHRC	ENC	Gondou = Short finned Pilot whale
Feb.6, 2007	Gondou	1.31	-	-	3.27 times higher than m.a.	PHRC	ENC	
Mar. 2, 2007	Common dolphin	1.66	-	-	4 times higher than m.a.	NSBC	JT	
Mar. 2, 2007	Risso's dolphin	14.3	-	-	35.75 times higher than m.a.	NSBC	JT	
Jun. 5, 2007	Magondou	4	3.1	0.27	A: 10 times higher than m.a. B: 10.3 times higher than m.a.	JIFE	Mr. Y.	Not from the drive hunt. The Seiwa-maru, a Coastal Whaling boat caught the gondou. Magondou = short finned pilot whale
Jun. 22, 2007	Gonsou(belly)	6.39	3.6	0.66	A: 15.97 times higher than m.a. B: 12 times higher than m.a. C: 1.32 times higher than m.a.	NSBC	Mr.Y.	

A Report on Mercury Contamination of Dolphin Meat from the Drive Hunts (Continued)

(2004 • 2006 ~ 2008)

Provisional regulatory levels of mercury and PCBs set by the Japanese government:
Mercury (T-Hg):0.4ppm, Methyl mercury (M-Hg):0.3ppm, PCBs:0.5pp

Date	Sample	A : T-Hg (ppm)	B : M-Hg (ppm)	C : PCBs (ppm)	Extent of contamination	Testing facility	Source	Notes
Jul. 7, 2007	Gondou (Tail)	11.9	4.8	2.6	A: 29.75 times higher than m.a.l. B : 16 times higher than m.a.l. C : 5.2 times higher than m.a.l.	NSBC	Mr. Y.	
Aug. 2, 2007	Gondou	3.84	-	-	9.6 times higher than m.a.l.	NSBC	JT	
Aug. 8, 2007	Gondou (skin with blubber)	2.42	0.34	0.13	A: 6.05 times higher than m.a.l. B : 1.13 times higher than m.a.l.	NSBC	Mr. Y.	
Sept. 21, 2007	Mairuka (belly)	2.98	2.18	-	A: 7.45 times higher than m.a.l. B : 7.26 times higher than m.a.l.	Dr. Endo	Mr. Y.	Mairuka = striped dolphin
Sept. 21, 2007	Magondou (belly)	11	6.63	-	A: 27.5 times higher than m.a.l. B : 22.1 times higher than m.a.l.	Dr. Endo	Mr. Y.	
Sept. 21, 2007	Magondou(tail)	15.5	8.53	-	A: 38.75 times higher than m.a.l. B : 28.43 times higher than m.a.l.	Dr. Endo	Mr. Y.	
Oct. 12, 2007	Gondou	10.4	-	-	26 times higher than m.a.l.	NSBC	JT	
Oct. 12, 2007	Gondou	11.8	-	-	29.5 times higher than m.a.l.	NSBC	JT	
Oct.12, 2007	Gondou	6.94	-	-	17.35 times higher than m.a.l.	NSBC	JT	
Mar.14, 2008	Bottlenose dolphin	7.2	1.6	0.05 (red meat) 1.4 (skin with blubber)	A: 29.5 times higher than m.a.l. B : 5 times higher than m.a.l. C (skin with blubber) : 2.8 times higher than m.a.l.	NSBC	Blue Voice	

Summary

The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare's web site houses a warning on the amount of mercury contained in the meat of dolphins, whales and fishes and the consumption on their meat. However, it is clear from our survey that such information by the MHLW is not being adequately conveyed to consumers or dealers of dolphin meat. Dealers of dolphin meat continue to sell contaminated product without any knowledge of mercury contamination and consumers continue to purchase and eat it also without any knowledge. In other words, it is evident that the halfhearted warning by the MHLW is not sufficient in protecting the health of consumers.

In any event, the fact that foodstuffs containing a toxic chemical (mercury) at levels that exceed the government established level are being sold without any regulation or warning is an issue that cannot be overlooked. Normally, food containing toxic chemicals at levels that exceed a regulatory level should never be shipped or sold. Until measures to prohibit selling of dolphin meat are enforced, dealers should be obliged to provide information to all consumers on the toxic content of the products on sale, by displaying labels with warnings concerning toxic chemical contamination. This allows the consumer to decide whether to purchase it or not.

In Japan, the sale of food containing residual agricultural chemicals in levels that exceed regulatory levels has been prohibited since 2006. Cigarette packages also display warnings about the harmful effect of smoking on health. The same measures should be taken for dolphin, whale, and fish meat which are found to contain amounts of mercury that exceed the provisional regulatory standard.

In Japan where fish is consumed regularly, a considerable amount of mercury must be accumulating in people who eat fish and dolphin meat. Mercury accumulation can be determined by hair analysis and we have received reports that indicate that the amount of mercury in the hair of people who eat dolphin meat is abnormally high or significantly above average. With continued hair inspection, the damage to health caused by the accumulation of mercury will become evident. In the meantime, prompt positive action by the government is essential in order to stop the adverse effect of mercury on our future generations.

We will continue to act as an intermediary by sending petitions concerning this problem to the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare from our web site.