

NATIONAL

Japan to cut 2021 saury catch quota to record low



A fisherman sorts out Pacific saury at Ofunato fish market in Ofunato, Iwate Prefecture, in September 2019. | REUTERS

Jiji

Apr 20, 2021

The Fisheries Agency on Tuesday unveiled a draft plan to cut Japan's saury catch quota for 2021 to a record low of 155,335 tons, down 41.2% from the previous year.

Based on an international agreement, Japan aims to reduce its 2021 quota by more than 40% from the current provisional level of 264,000 tons, unchanged from 2020.

Amid some of the poorest saury catches in history, Japan will step up its efforts to conserve fish stocks for a future recovery, informed sources said.

The agency presented the draft plan at a meeting with domestic fishers. It will be formally adopted in the near future after a meeting of the Fisheries Policy Council, which advises the agriculture minister.

Pacific saury stocks are believed to be decreasing due to higher seawater temperatures and aggressive fishing by China and Taiwan in the high seas before the fish reach Japanese coastal waters.

At an annual meeting of the North Pacific Fisheries Commission in February, eight members, including Japan, China and Taiwan, agreed to set a cap on their overall saury catches for 2021 at 333,750 tons, down 40% from the previous year.

Japan's saury catches have been generally declining since their peak of some 575,000 tons in 1958.

According industry data, the country's saury catches in 2020 fell 27% from the previous year to 29,566 tons, hitting a record low for the second successive year.

Despite progress in fishery resource management, Japan's new 2021 quota would be still 120,000 tons more than the amount caught in 2020.

Some observers are calling for the lowering of quotas for Japan and other economies to ensure that fish stocks recover faster.

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