

Fukushima Dai-ichi and the Ocean: 10 years of study and insight Abstract Submission Form : Entry # 21

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Science and Society

Abstract Title (English, limited to 300 characters)

Risk communication to support the revitalisation of Fukushima fisheries since 2011

Abstract (English, limited to 2000 characters)

We reflect on risk communication efforts to build citizens' trust in seafood from Fukushima Prefecture. Fisheries in Fukushima Prefecture were voluntarily suspended immediately after the accident, but since 2012 coastal fisheries have been gradually re-commencing on a trial basis. If radioactive caesium is not detected in a species during monitoring activities, then that species can be released for small-scale commercial operations and sold for consumption. A critical aspect of these post-disaster operations is to encourage the public to eat Fukushima fish by emphasising not only the safety, but also the quality, of Fukushima seafood.

Drawing on our own empirical research on the Fukushima coast since 2011, we argue face-to-face communication and engagement by fisheries extension officers working for Fukushima Prefecture, and the activism of local citizen monitoring organisations, has been vital to build trust in monitoring and screening results and restore pride in local fisheries. What makes these communication efforts effective, we believe, is that they are led by people who have lived and worked in Fukushima Prefecture since long before the accident, and are hence viewed as themselves bearing the risks of any decisions made. Moreover, we suggest that open and transparent engagement activities, such as tasting events and demonstrations of the monitoring process, are valuable spaces for citizens in Fukushima to engage in the processes through which assessments of safety are made.

We also discuss the planned releases of treated water from Fukushima Dai'ichi into the sea, which are strongly opposed by local fishers due to the potential reputational damage to Fukushima fish. Our most recent findings suggest that good

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explanation of the rationale for releasing water and for monitoring its effects on the sea, and ensuring groups like fishers have been treated fairly, are vital to build public support for the releases and maintain trust in Fukushima seafood.