

Japan: 90% of Tohoku's fishing fleet said lost

Friday 29 April 2011, by [Japan Times](#) (Date first published: 29 April 2011).

SENDAI - The March 11 tsunami rendered around 90 percent of the 29,000 fishing boats in the three most severely hit prefectures unusable, according to provisional tallies by the three prefectures.

Reviving the fishing industries in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures is indispensable to rebuilding local economies, so the prefectural governments and local fishing cooperatives are mulling a range of steps, including allowing fishermen to operate boats or breed fish and other marine products collectively.

Miyagi Gov. Yoshihiro Murai has called on the central government to make the areas' fishing industries "state-owned" for a provisional period of about three years and to finance new vessels and port facilities with an eye to selling them to private businesses such as trading houses at a later date.

Murai has also proposed that the private firms run the fishing business as stock companies or in other forms, while paying wages to fishermen as "employees," as it will be hard for fishermen to reinstate their long-time businesses with their own financial resources.

It has so far been confirmed that 18,600 fishing boats, worth a combined ¥130 billion, have been damaged. But the total number of unusable boats is estimated at more than 25,700, given that the Iwate government has not yet tallied the damage to the prefecture's fishing industry.

Miyagi has confirmed the safety of only 1,000 fishing boats out of the prefecture's registered fleet of 13,700, concluding the remaining 12,000 boats must have been damaged.

Iwate Prefecture has confirmed that 5,726 fishing boats of its registered fleet of 14,300 vessels have been damaged. But it believes more than 90 percent of the registered boats have become unusable.

Fukushima Prefecture said it has confirmed that 873 fishing boats out of its registered fleet of 1,173 have been damaged.

The total catch of the three prefectures, excluding cultivated fish, amounted to 446,300 tons in 2009, accounting for around 10 percent of Japan's annual catch. The fishing ground off the Sanriku coast of Miyagi Prefecture is known as one of the world's richest.

A fishermen's co-op in Minamisanriku, Miyagi Prefecture, meanwhile took the first step toward collectively managing the business by placing orders for 500 cultivation rafts for "wakame" seaweed with an eye to leasing them to its members.

Under the project, the co-op will lease the rafts at ¥260,000 each and other equipment, with the profits from the project to be divided among the members.

Koichi Anbe, who took over as acting chief of the co-op after his predecessor was killed in the disaster, said it will take three to five years before its members will be able to buy their own equipment with accumulated capital from the shared profits.

Kyodo, Thursday, April 28, 2011

P.S.

* <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20110428a5.html>