Kinme Boss facing double trouble in Japan

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Photo: *Landing of Kinme fish. Inatori, Shizuoka Prefecture, Japan. 2017 ©Inatori Branch of Izu FCA*

The Kinme-Splendid Alfonsino (*Beryx splendens*) fishery in Inatori, Izu Peninsular, Shizuoka, has a long history and its origin can be traced back to the Meiji Era (1868~1912). A *Tatenawa* fishing (Single-hook fishing) that used small-motor vessels was performed during the Taisho Era (1912~1926). A more progressive development followed the post-war rehabilitation and high economic growth, leading to this fishery becoming an essential fishery in Inatori region. Its fishing grounds are the deep areas of the sea between Inatori and Izu-Oshima Island, Tokyo. The fishery is a license-free fishery, meaning any fisher can conduct the fishery without a license.

According to the Inatori Branch of the Izu Fisheries Cooperative Association (FCA), the fishing operation runs from sunrise to 4pm. The catch is stored in ice water on the vessel and immediately after landing, the fish are sorted and shipped in the styrene foam boxes to a mostly metropolitan area. Through a series of efforts focused on quality control, the Inatori Branch of Izu FCA established the 'Inatori Kinme' brand in 2013. Since then, the Inatori Kinme has played a vital role in community revitalization, resulting in a number of local Kinme-related economic and cultural activities such as Kinme festivals, Kinme Marathon race, direct sales stores, and Kinme restaurants.

Location:
Inatori, Shizuoka, Japan

Ecosystem type:
Marine

Main gear:
Hook & line

Target species:
Splendid alfosino, apanese spiny lobster, Agar weed

Vessel type:
Power driven

No. of small-scale fishing vessels:
54

No. of small-scale fishers:
50

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Justice in context

Types of justice:

- Distributive
- **Social**
- Economic
- Market
- Infrastructure/wellbeing
- **Regulatory**
- **Procedural**
- Environmental
- **COVID-19 related**

The volume of catch in Kinme fishery had increased rapidly since 1979 when the bottom longline method was introduced. Subsequently, overfishing has become a big concern. In these circumstances, various management rules such as the release of juvenile fish, regulations on the fishing gears and methods, setting of the fishing season, and non-fishing area and others have been introduced for fishers and the operators of the recreational fishery (mostly fishers). The compliance rate of these rules is considerably high. However, there have been increasing numbers of pleasure-boat owners fishing the Kinme in recent years. Though the amount of the catch by pleasure-boat owners is not fully understood, in Kinme fishers' opinion, the amount is quite high. As a result, a strong sense of unfairness and injustice has been growing among fishers, notably since the Kinme fish stock has declined and is still not in a stable condition. In Addition, the COVID-19 outbreak has increased the unfairness and anxieties among the fishers because even though the financial support system exists, some do not fully recognize the nature of the fisheries, which makes it hard for the fishers to qualify for or the amount of the support is too small to cope with the situation. Overall, these are the main reasons behind the current situation:

- Decrease of fish stock due to natural and anthropocentric factors;
- Increasing numbers of coastal water users;
- Lack of organized system among pleasure-boat owners; difficulties with estimating the number of boats and catch volume;
- Lack of legal ways to 'fight' against pleasure boat owners since the fishery is license-free;
- Lack of communication between fishers and pleasure-boat owners;
- Difficulties with communication and negotiation among stakeholders as the governing authority overlaps between Shizuoka Prefecture and Tokyo Metropolis;
- Lack of integrated coastal management rules; and
- Lack of appropriate funding support for small-scale fisheries affected by COVID-19

Definition of small-scale fisheries

Generally referred as coastal fisheries, characterized by commutable distances from fishing ports (within a day). According to the official definition from Annual Statistics on Fishery and Aquaculture Production, coastal fishery include non-fishing-vessel fisheries, fisheries with non-powered fishing vessels or with powered fishing vessels less than 10 tons, set-net fisheries and beach seine fisheries.

> *... the Inatori Kinme fishers have not received much agreement (...) the complexity of the fishery background, including regulatory deficiency, makes it challenging to find a solution.*

Dealing with justice

Some Kinme fishers informally asked the pleasure boat owners to leave the Kinme fishing grounds. However, this was ineffective as the fishery is license-free, lacking legal grounds. Also, the pleasure boat owners and fishers might get into a quarrel, leading to safety issues.

The Inatori Branch of Izu FCA has raised this issue in the Shizuoka Prefecture Sea Area Use Council, which is an official discussion forum, set for the coordination of recreational fisheries and fisheries. It was agreed at the council that some measures should be taken, including distributing leaflets. However, because the Inatori Kinme fishing grounds partially overlap with the sea area of the Tokyo Metropolis, for the fishers to informally ask the pleasure-boat owners to leave or for the relevant coast guard to officially crack down their activity, a discussion and coordination with the Tokyo Metropolis are needed.

The Inatori Branch of Izu FCA has visited Tokyo with the prefectural officials to ask for understanding and cooperation regarding crackdowns and publicity. However, the Inatori Kinme fishers have not received much agreement due to a lack of understanding, and so far, they have not been able to take any measures. As described, the complexity of the fishery background, including regulatory deficiency, makes it challenging to find a solution.

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