

# Actual Problems of Russian Crab Exports to Japan

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During the last 10 year period more than 85 percent of Russian crab products were exported to East Asia countries, such as Japan, South Korea, China, and to the USA. At present time the situation has not changed. Japan is the major partner of Russian fisheries companies which supply to this country legal and illegal fishery products<sup>1</sup>.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing) in North-East Asia is a serious international problem for both exporters and importers. IUU fishing leads to depletion of fishing stocks, destroys the ecological balance and leads to depopulation of biological resources, contributes to development of international criminal groups and adversely affect national security.

Illegal fishing around the world has caused to 60 percent of fish stocks to be in need of repair and rebuilding to sustain supplies. Only 25 percent of commercial fish stocks around the world are considered to be in good share in 2010. The global shipping fleet of around 20 million boats creates a fishing capacity that is 1.8 to 2.8 times larger than what current fish population can support<sup>2</sup>. According to experts situation on East Asian fish stocks (especially in crab segments) is similar to the world. Up to 26 million tons of fish, worth an estimated \$23bn (£16bn), are landed illegally each year<sup>3</sup>. Illegal production and export of crabs are seriously threatening population of these crustaceans.

Unfortunately official data of Russia's foreign trade statistics do not reflect realistic volumes of crab export because state agencies can not keep official records of illegally fished products. Nevertheless, data provided by Federal State Statistics Service (FSSS) and Federal Customs Service (FCS) have the national information status and used both at the fishery industry level and at the level of private enterprises. Thus, politicians and scientists are forced to make decisions

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1 Illegal fishery products – aquatic biological resources fished out against the law.

2 Bryan Walsh "Cracking Down on the Ocean's Pirate Fishermen"  
<http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1991172,00.html>.

3 Mark Kinver "Ports 'failing to halt illegal fishing' "  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10131041>.

on quotas based on official statistics and conduct costly research annually.

This research is based on data provided by statistic services of Japan and the United States of America – the main consumers of Russian crab production. Comparison of international statistics allows to determine close to reality volumes of aquatic biological resources (ABR) illegal fishing in the waters of Russia, as well as to assess its supplies.

### Exports of Russian Crab Production to Japan.

According to customs statistics of Japan, there are no significant changes in the structure and volumes of ABR imports from Russia until 2006. In 2005, Japan imported 213 thousand tons of Russian seafood, in 2006 - 221 thousand tons, including 73,5 thousand tons (more than 33%) of crab products. As we can see on diagram 1 and table 1 Japanese crab import reduces gradually (2006 – 101,5, 2007 – 83,4, 2008 – 80,8, 2009 – 72,6). Regarding to price fluctuations, over the past five years, the average price of 1 ton of crab has increased by more than 20%.

Table 1. Japanese Crab Import (metric tons)

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010 (Jan-Nov)
LIVE/FRESH:					
King Crab	16,4	7,6	5,7	6,3	2,8
Tanner Crab	27,6	26,7	25,1	23,5	11,39
FROZEN:					
King Crab	16,8	14,4	14,1	10,3	7,12
Tanner Crab	24,6	20,2	21,1	18,6	17,94
PREPARED	16,1	14,5	14,8	13,9	11,41

Table 2. Japanese Crab Import (million yen)

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010 (Jan-Nov)
LIVE/FRESH:					
King Crab	9,48	5,54	4,26	3,96	2,62
Tanner Crab	8,09	10,51	9,54	6,95	4,86
FROZEN:					
King Crab	22,29	21,37	26,56	15,03	13,2
Tanner Crab	24,01	24,22	24,79	17,22	17,68
PREPARED	23,47	23,28	25,29	21,51	15,44

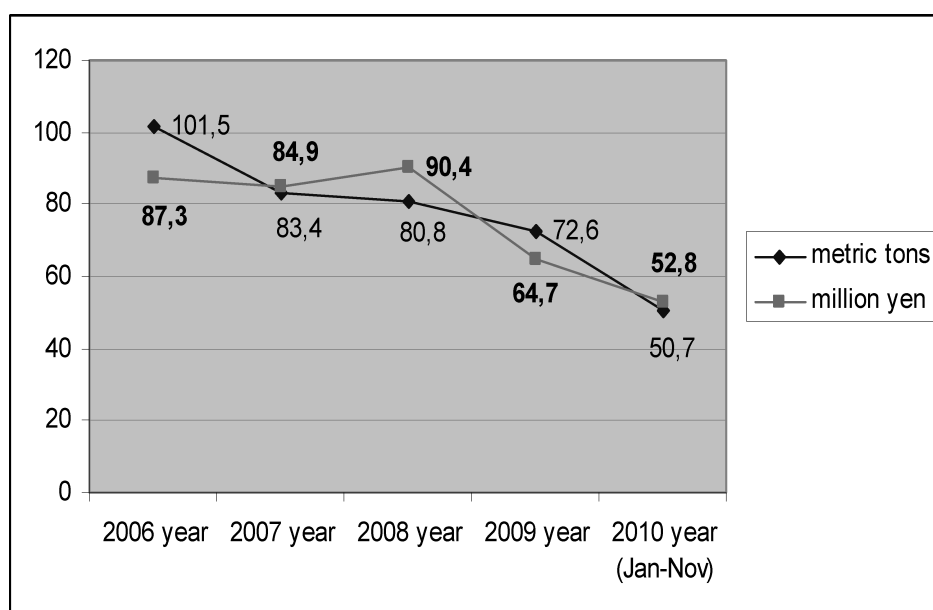


Diagram 1. Japanese Crab Import, total

Russian fishery companies still active and interested in market of Japan despite of import reduction. Structure of crab import has undergone several changes in recent years. Annually, size of supplying king crab miniaturizing as well as quality deterioration. Experts attribute this to excessive exploitation of the Russian Far-Eastern resource base, which could lead to crabs depopulation. A decisive influence on the population of crabs has commercial fishing of females and young crabs. Proportion of females in total supply is about 70%. Russian companies exports crab production the whole year round, even in reproduction period (Diagram 2). It is gross infraction of the law.

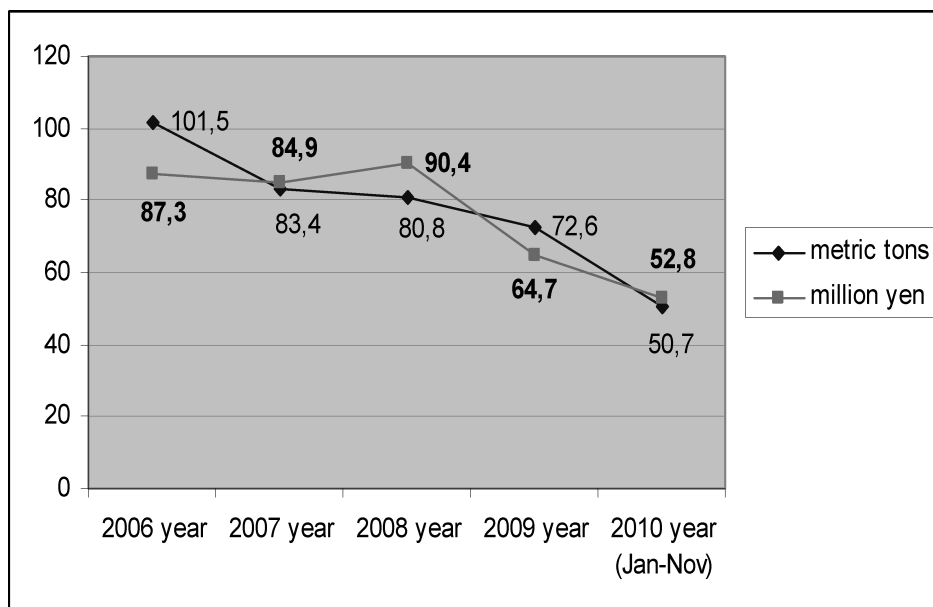


Diagram 2. Prepared Crab Exports from Russia to Japan, 2010 (Jan-Nov)

According to Russian Federal fishery rules commercial fishing and export of females, young crabs, and so called fresh crabs is not allowed year-around. Only male crabs that meet minimum legal size may be harvested. Nevertheless, some major international companies continue to purchase Russian illegal production.

Relations between Russia and Japan in the field of fisheries are regulated by a number of intergovernmental agreements that do not bring positive results. Consultations within the Russian-Japanese Commission on Fisheries also do not allow to our countries to establish an effective struggle against illegal fishery and trade in seafood products.

Nevertheless Russia and Japan can use international experience and in short term decide such priority problems as:

- Insufficient information about vessels.
- Lack of compliance.
- Efficient cooperation between border guards and port authorities in vessels and commodity monitoring.

Resume. Significant changes in the volume of illegal fishing and exports structure of crab products abroad is not observed in recent years. Despite the tightening of Russia's legislation, crabs exports to Japan remains high. One-sided

struggle against international poachers is completely unproductive.

At present time crab supplies could be reduced only because of depopulation. Lack of Russian and Japanese effective control over fishing allows international poachers repeatedly exceed fishery limits and suffer great losses to our nature and country reputation.

**Keywords** Russian-Japanese trade relations Crab exports  
Russian Far-Eastern resource base IUU Fishing  
Crabs depopulation

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