

Press Release (This is provisional translation. Please refer to the original text written in Japanese.)

April 8, 2011
Standards and Evaluation Division,
Department of Food Safety

To Press and those whom may concern,

Provisional remarks on radioactive iodine in fishery products, in relation to the accident of the Fukushima nuclear power plant

This is an announcement that the Working Group on Radioactive Materials Measures, Food Sanitation Subcommittee, Pharmaceutical Affairs and Food Sanitation Council, was held today and that the attached “Provisional remarks on radioactive iodine in fishery products” has been compiled.

April 8, 2011
Working Group on Radioactive Materials Measures
Food Sanitation Subcommittee
Pharmaceutical Affairs and Food Sanitation Council

Provisional remarks on radioactive iodine in fishery products

On April 4, 2011, the Food Sanitation Subcommittee, Pharmaceutical Affairs and Food Sanitation Council put together its “provisional remarks on radioactive materials present in foods.” The following remarks are summarized by the Working Group on the subsequent handling of provisional regulation values on radioactive iodine in fishery products based on the Food Sanitation Act.

On March 24, 2011, in response to the detection of radioactive iodine and cesium in sea water, the Nuclear Safety Commission made judgment that, “It is considered that the concentration of radioactive materials emitted into the sea water will be considerably thinned since it is proliferated along with the tidal current before actually ingested by marine life such as fish and seaweed. Since the radioactive iodine has a relatively shorter half-life period, 8 days, it is assumed that its concentration will be substantially decreased before people take such marine foods.”

On the other hand, in the afternoon of April 4, a case, in which a considerable level of radioactive iodine is detected in fish (“Juvenile sand lance”), was reported from Ibaraki prefecture to MHLW. Based on the Nuclear Emergency Response Headquarters’ policies, following the advice of the Nuclear Safety Commission, MHLW decided to tentatively apply the same provisional regulation value of 2,000 Bq/kg used for vegetables, for which provisional regulation values had been set under the category of foods other than beverages and milk and dairy products. MHLW then notified local authorities that fishery products exceeding this level should not be supplied for human consumption as it conflicted with Article 6.2 of the Food Sanitation Act.

The Working Group is of view that the provisional regulation value set by MHLW based on the Food Sanitation Act in regard to radioactive iodine in fishery products is necessary measure taken under emergency situations. The Working Group also considers that, taking into account that the emission of radioactive materials has not been restored to its normal state, the relevant provisional regulation values should be maintained under the present circumstances. Furthermore, the Working Group thinks that a system, in which various data can be continuously analyzed and evaluated, needs to be constructed, when the future regulation values are considered. On 24 March, the Nuclear Safety Commission made a decision that “the sea monitoring investigation should continuously be conducted.” The Working Group, therefore, considers that the inspection and monitoring system needs to be enhanced in order to improve the safety and sense of security of people.

Furthermore, as with the Food Sanitation Subcommittee’s last remarks, the Working Group demands that MHLW make efforts in preparing detail regulations, enhancing the content and opportunities for risk communication with the public, etc.

