

Greenpeace pushes for better fish radiation disclosure

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Staff writer

Greenpeace Japan urged the government Thursday to come up with strict rules requiring that fish products bear labels showing the radioactive materials they contain.

The environmentalist group also said labels should include where fish were caught rather than just showing what port they came from, to strengthen the traceability of the products.

Greenpeace made the call after conducting radiation tests on 60 fish products from five major supermarket chains in the Kanto and Tohoku areas. Although the contamination level in each was lower than the government's provisional standard, cesium-134 or -137 was detected in 34 products.

The highest level, 88 becquerels, was found in "wakasagi" lake smelt from Ibaraki Prefecture. The second-highest was in "buri" adult yellowtail from Iwate at 60 becquerels.

The government's safety standard for fish is 500 becquerels per kilogram.

"Although the levels were far lower than the government's standard, 10 or 20 becquerels have a huge meaning for parents of little children and pregnant women," said Wakao Hanaoka, in charge of marine ecology issues at Greenpeace.

"By displaying such information, consumers can safely choose and purchase products, and it would serve as a measure against harmful rumors," he said.

The tests were conducted from Sept. 4 to Oct. 7 on types of fish caught in the Pacific Ocean and often eaten in fall.

Store operators that cooperated with Greenpeace for the project were Aeon Co., Ito-Yokado Co., Daiei Inc., Seiyu GK and Uny Co.

The results showed no particular trends in terms of certain stores or areas selling fish with higher contamination.

The health ministry has also been conducting radiation tests on food and detected trace amounts of cesium in fish products from stores.

One difference between the tests by Greenpeace and the government is that the ministry set the lowest limit at 50 becquerels per kilogram while the environmentalist group set the minimum at 5 becquerels.

Greenpeace also asked the Japan Chain Stores Association to let its members voluntarily put radiation test results on their products and come up with stores' own safety standards.

Since many people are concerned about the food contamination, having voluntary tests and disclosing results would respond consumer needs, said Hanaoka.

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