

IWC investigates interaction between whales and fish

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The Commissioners of the International Whaling Commission today unanimously agreed to investigate as a high priority the interaction between whales and fish stocks. This agreement was based on a joint resolution proposed by Japan and the United States.

Japan's Alternate Commissioner to the IWC, Masayuki Komatsu, welcomed the resolution, noting that there is increasing concern among fishing nations and international and regional fisheries management organisations, including the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (UNFAO), about the increasing competition between whales and fish.

"That it has recognised the importance of an eco-system approach to management of all marine resources is important progress for the IWC," said Mr Komatsu, who is also the Chairman of the FAO's Committee on Fisheries.

Mr Komatsu also said: "We view this agreement as recognition of the results of Japan's whale research programs, which have shown that whales consume large quantities of fish, often in direct competition with fisheries."

Japan's research programme in the Western North Pacific has revealed that whales consume large quantities of anchovy, walleye pollock and squid, all-important species to Japanese fishermen.

"These fish stocks make up a substantial part of the diet of minke, Bryde's and sperm whales. Japanese scientists estimate that cetaceans consume three to five times the amount of fish harvested for human consumption."