

Fishing Ports of Japan

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Gleaming, spotless, picture-postcard-perfect: Japan's fishing harbours are icons of excellence in technology, management and upkeep. "Big investment alone doesn't ensure quality, it has to be married to discipline and commitment," remarked a visitor.

While governments play a major role in planning and constructing the harbours, day-to-day upkeep is often the responsibility of fisheries co-operative associations, and they do an impeccable job. Fishers and fisher associations in the Bay of Bengal region – take note!

Here's a word-and-picture tour of Japan's fishing ports illustrative, not comprehensive.

Japan has 2 917 fishing ports, distributed over five islands and 42 Prefectures (or provinces). A fishing port must be approved by the Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) of the government of Japan before it can be commissioned. Local opinion is considered before approvals are given. The cost of commissioning a fishing port is shared by the Fisheries Agency and the Prefectural government concerned. Japan's fishing ports are managed either by Prefectural governments or by municipal governments and they are of four types, as described below:

Type I fishing ports (about 76 % of the total) are used mainly by local fishers.

Type II fishing ports (about 17 % of the total) cover a larger administrative area as compared to Type I fishing ports.

Type III fishing ports (about 4.0 % of the total) are used by fishing vessels of all the Prefectures of Japan. Of these, there are 13 key ports, labeled as 'Special Type III

Fishing Ports (STTFP)', located in major fishing areas of Japan.

Type IV fishing ports (about 3.0 % of the total) are located in remote islands and/ or geographically disadvantaged areas. These ports help develop fishing grounds and shelter fishing vessels when the seas are rough.

Table 1 provides Island-wise distribution of different categories of fishing ports in Japan.

Special Type III Fishing Ports: The 13 STTFPs in Japan are strategically distributed among 11 Prefectures (Aomori, Miyagi, Chiba, Kanagawa, Shizuoka, Tottori, Shimane, Yamaguchi, Fukuoka, Nagasaki and Kagoshima). Miyagi Prefecture alone has three STTFPs (Shiogama; Kesen-numa and Ishinomaki).

Kesen-numa port in Miyagi Prefecture is a famous hub for tuna

Table 1: Fishing ports in Japan

Island/ Prefecture	Type I	Type II	Type III	Type IV	Total
I. Hokkaido Island	215	30	18	21	284
II. Honshu Island	978	289	66	36	1369
III. Shikoku Island	344	48	8	4	404
IV. Kyushu Island	594	125	21	32	772
V. Okinawa Island	76	4	1	7	88
Total	2207	496	114	100	2917

Note: The number of STTFP ports are included in Type III Fishing Ports.

longliners and shark fin vessels. Yaizu fishing port in Shizuoka Prefecture is Japan's biggest fishing port for tuna landing. Many large tuna longliners (sizes ranging from 300 GT to 500 GT) which operate in the Indian Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, unload their catch at this port.

Makurazaki fishing port (Kagoshima Prefecture in Kyushu Island) is famous for landing of skipjack (*Katsuonus pelamis*) pole and line fishing vessels. Shimonoseki fishing port (Yamaguchi Prefecture) is famous for landing of globefish, or puffer fish (*Fugu rubripes*) from autumn to winter. The puffer fish is quite expensive, and often fetches 5 000 yen/ kg (about US\$ 55/ kg at current exchange rate). The Hakata fishing port (Fukuoka Prefecture in the northern tip of Kyushu Island, close to Korea and China) is frequented by many Korean and Chinese fishing vessels to unload their catch. Fish transport vessels from these countries also frequently visit this port.

Process of commissioning a fishing port

When fishers want a port, they raise the issue at the general meeting of their Fisheries Cooperative Association (FCA). A resolution requesting a port is sent to the local government (municipality and Prefectural Government), which in turn approaches the Fishing Port Building Consultative Committee. At the same time, the local or Prefectural Government inspects the port site and draws up a plan, often employing private consulting companies.

The FCA lobbies with members of the local assembly, the Prefectural assembly and national Parliament members representing that Prefecture to hasten the decision-making process. Lobbying is a part of the strategy – since it's the Minister who has to approve of the port and the national government that has to fund it. A tug-of-war between different governments and agencies over budget allocation is common. The final power for site selection rests with the Minister of MAFF. The Central government usually meets half of the expense for a fishing port, and the Prefectural government the other half. Sometimes, the local government (city or town) pitches in with 25 percent.

- 1-Fishing port of Aji FCA located at Aji-cho, Takamatsu city, Kagawa Prefecture;
- 2-Fishing port at Notsuke, Hokkaido;
- 3-Slipway facilities at a Fishing port operated by Nago FCA, Okinawa;
- 4- Fishing port operated by Shin Fukaura FCA in Aomori Prefecture;
- 5 A fishing village with fishing port facilities in Aomori Prefecture;
- 6- Oodose Wholesale Fish Market, Aomori Prefecture.

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Table 2: Criteria for classification of fishing ports

Type of fishing port	Criterion for classification of the port
Type I	More than 25 fishing vessels; < 250 GT in total gross tonnage. (For ports facing the Sea of Japan (SoJ), < 18 fishing vessels and < 175 GT). The catch landed should be < 1 125 metric tons per year (for ports facing the SoJ, it is 788 metric tons). The port has mooring and fish handling facilities and roads that are wider than 3m.
Type II (At least three criteria are fulfilled)	More than 50 local fishing vessels, with < 500 GT. In Prefectures facing the SoJ (Akita, Yamagata, Niigata, Toyama, Ishikawa, Fukui, Kyoto, Hyogo, Tottori, and Shimane Prefectures), the number is < 35 fishing vessels, with total gross tonnage <350 GT. More than 25 fishing vessels with < 250 GT. For ports facing SoJ, < 18 fishing vessels with <175 GT. The conditions for landing of catch and other facilities are same as required for Type I Ports.
Type III (At least three criteria are fulfilled)	More than 140 local fishing vessels, with gross tonnage < 2 400 GT. For Prefectures facing SoJ, < 98 fishing vessels of < 1 680 GT. More than 70 fishing vessels with < 1 600 GT. In case of Ports facing SoJ < 49 fishing vessels with gross tonnage < 1120 GT. The Annual fish landing at the Port should be < 5 000 metric tons; for Ports facing the SoJ it should be < 3 500 metric tons. The port should have has mooring and road facilities (wider than 5.5 m) or a railway line; facilities for fish handling, vessel repair, water supply, fuel supply, ice-making, freezer and cold storage are also mandatory.
Type IV The port should be situated either in remote island or in geographically disadvantaged area.	The port is especially necessary from the standpoint of fishing The port should be ground development (as a base port for development) and also situated either in as a shelter for fishing vessels. Further, there should be no remote island or in such port within 50 km radius. However, this criterion does geographically not apply for difficult areas (rapid currents, topographical disadvantaged areas, irregularities, threatening oceanic and weather phenomena). The port is expected to provide a reasonable calm water area. It must help strengthen the safety and efficiency of two or more fishing ports nearby and should strengthen development and assist in disaster mitigation.

Criteria for selecting sites for fishing ports

Article 6 of the Fishing Port and Fishing Ground Development Act (Law No. 137, 1950) lays out the criteria for constructing a fishing port. The site should have an enabling natural and economic environment, and should be used by local fishers as their base port. More than 20 local fishing vessels should patronize the site, and there ought to be a justification for a port (such as a need for shelter). Table 2 specifies the criteria for permitting various type of fishing ports.

The Fishery Policy Council

Any changes to a fishing port (concerning fresh construction or modernization, for example) must

be approved by the Minister of MAFF, who will consult the Fishery Policy Council (FPC) and ascertain the views of local public entities as well. The FPC (19 members plus advisors) has three committees – a Planning Committee; a Fisheries Resources Committee; and a Fishing Port and Fishing Ground Development Committee.

Source: Gyokou Gyojou Gyoson (Handbook of Japan's Fishing Port, Fishing Ground and Fishing Communities, 2009).

1-4: Fishing boats operating from ports in Japan; 5:Early morning auction in Hakodate Fishing port, Hokkaido.

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