

To Readers who, Worried about Post-disaster Safety, Hesitate to Visit Japan



Author Naoyuki Haraoka

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A phone call woke me up on a Sunday morning in March. It was an unexpected call from San Francisco. I was very surprised to hear a voice on my mobile that happened to be that of my French teacher, who has been living in San Francisco for many years. She asked me “Vous allez bien?” Then I immediately understood why she had called me. She was very shocked to see the news of the disaster. According to her, an elderly French lady who has been teaching French literature to Americans in San Francisco for many years, my old classmates studying French literature with her were all worrying about me. As soon as she heard my answer, “Oui, ca va bien.,” she was greatly relieved. A week after this telephone conversation, I got a large card with my old classmates’ warmhearted words expressing their sympathy for the Japanese people suffering from the disaster.

I was very touched by such a special friendship coming from my stay in San Francisco as Chief Executive Director of JETRO San Francisco several years ago.

Since then I have heard that many Japanese who have been abroad had the same experience as I did. Their old friends overseas worried so much about them and phoned them to see if they were all right.

Many of them don’t know exactly what happened to Japan in the earthquake and they don’t have any precise information on the nuclear power station, which is still in a serious situation after the earthquake and tsunami. There are even harmful rumors spreading concerning possible radioactive contamination in Japan and the safety of Japanese agricultural products.

On behalf of *Japan SPOTLIGHT*, in the introduction of the July/August 2011 issue highlighting the mid- and long-term consequences

of the calamity on March 11, 2011, I thought it would be relevant to inform our overseas friends of the precise, updated situation of the nuclear power station in the instability after the disaster, and the current Japanese economy.

In particular, looking at many people overseas hesitating to visit Japan as tourists, businesspeople or students because of the nuclear and economic crisis caused by the earthquake, and the diffusion of related harmful rumors, it is crucial to explain the reality in detail to prevent their misunderstanding of the situation.

After their understanding of the situation has improved, it would be wonderful if their hesitation to visit and stay in Japan is somewhat modified.

As our readers already know, *Japan SPOTLIGHT* is a bimonthly magazine. Therefore, the information I am now going to provide may be slightly outdated when the issue is published.

However, in the light of the high interest of people overseas concerning the crisis of the nuclear power station in Japan and the immediate damage to the Japanese economy caused by the earthquake, I think it will still be useful for our readers.

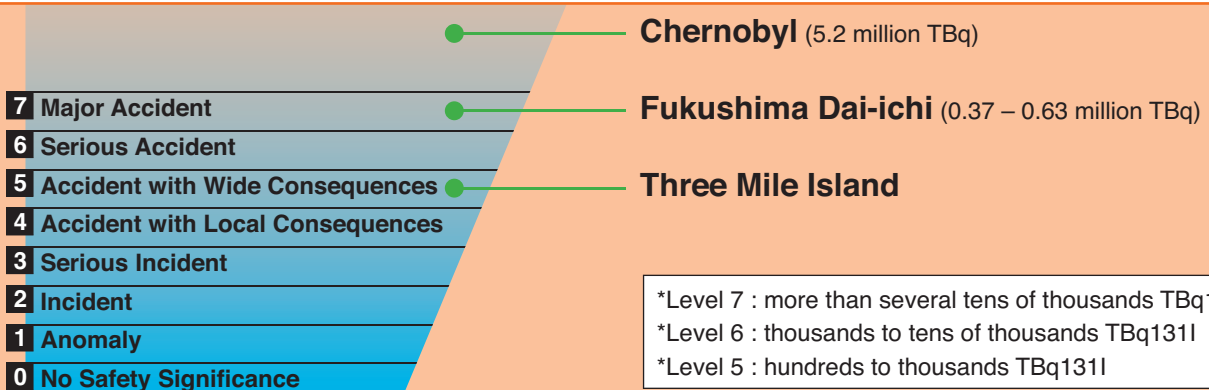
I hope this issue’s highlighted cover story on the long-term implications of the disaster for the Japanese economy and policy, which will be subsequently summarized in this introductory part, will be fruitful in promoting an understanding of what this unprecedented disaster has brought about, with the following description of some immediate and short-term aspects of the crisis.

Firstly, I would like to introduce a few fact sheets on the Nuclear Accident at the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Station prepared

CHART 1

INES rating on the events in Fukushima Dai-ichi NPS

The Rating of the International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale (INES) on Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Station (NPS), temporarily assessed as Level 7.

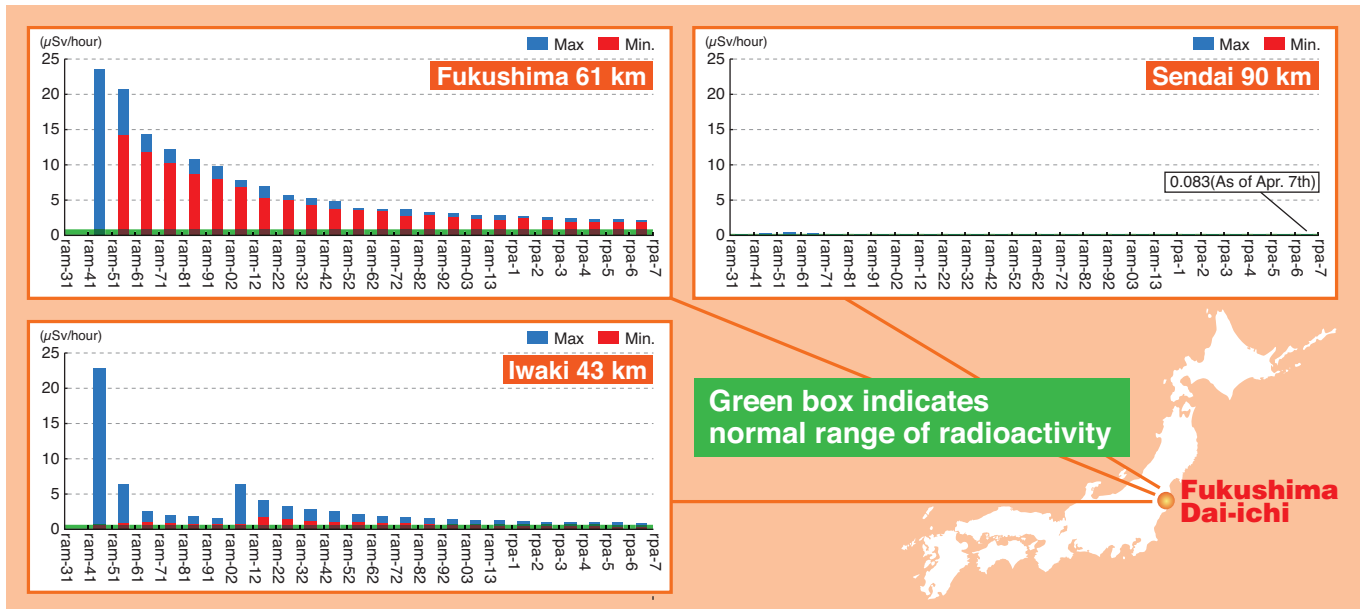


*Level 7 : more than several tens of thousands TBq131I
 *Level 6 : thousands to tens of thousands TBq131I
 *Level 5 : hundreds to thousands TBq131I

Source: Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI)

CHART 2

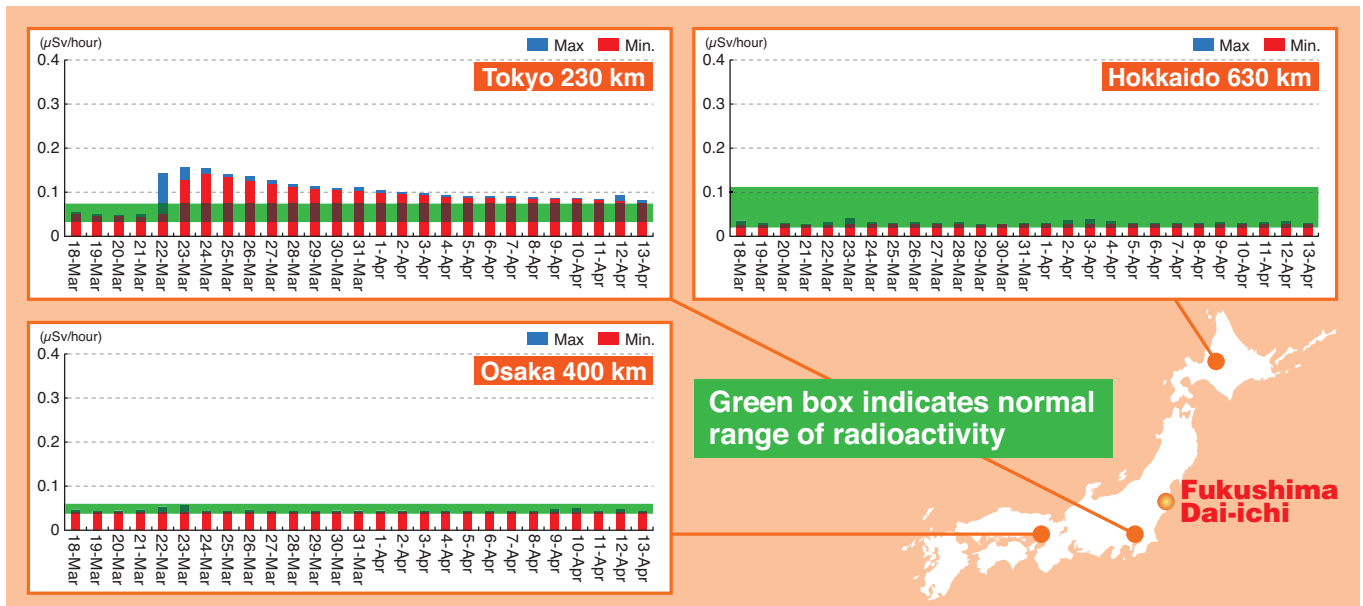
Atmospheric readings within 100 km



Source: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) & Fukushima Prefectural Government

CHART 3

Atmospheric readings in Tokyo, Osaka and Sapporo



Source: MEXT

by Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) in April, 2011.

- 1) INES Rating on the Events in Fukushima Dai-ichi NPS
Radioactive contamination is steadily decreasing as below and is not of so much concern now.
- 2) Atmospheric readings within 100 km
- 3) Atmospheric readings in Tokyo, Osaka and Sapporo
- 4) Results of tests on radionuclides in fresh produce
- 5) Safety of marine food
- 6) Safety of drinking water
- 7) Safety of industrial product

Secondly, in a fact sheet about the damage to the Japanese economy, also prepared by METI, damaged stocks in disaster areas amount to 16-25 trillion yen, corresponding to 3-4% of Japan's GDP.

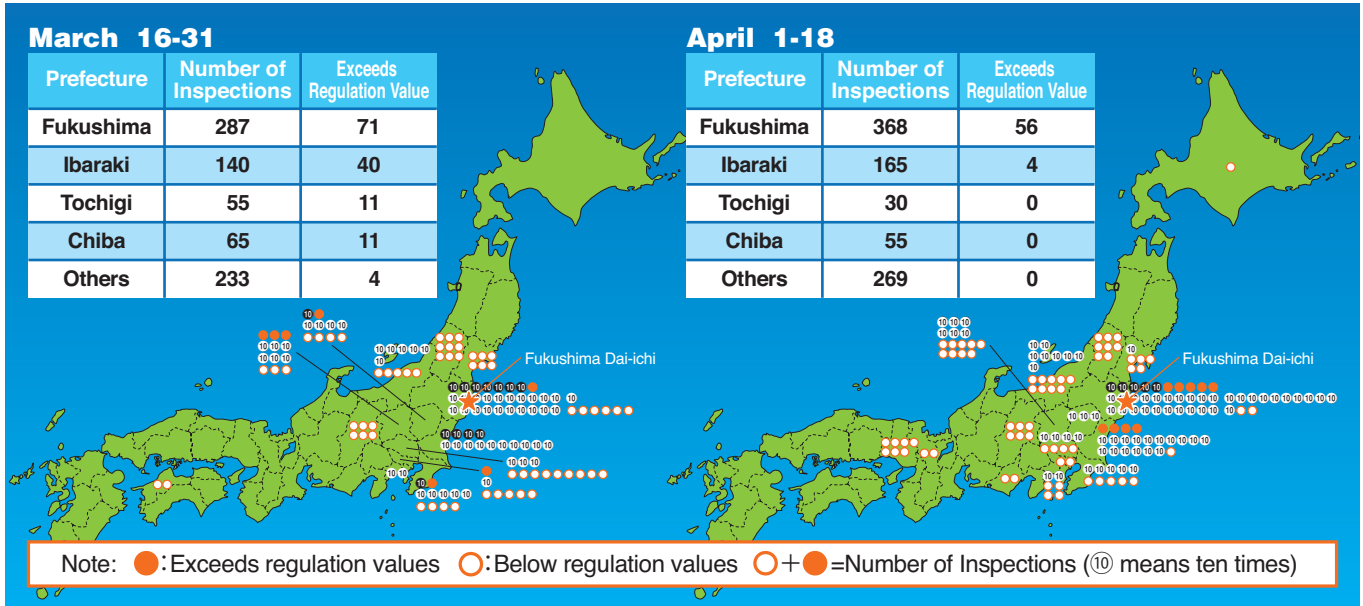
Apart from this figure on the macroeconomy, METI investigated the immediate impact of the disaster on industries in the second week of April, 2011. It covered 80 firms (55 manufacturing, 25 retailing and service).

For manufacturing firms, they had managed to restore more than 60% of production sites in the disaster area at the time of the METI research, and in addition a little less than 30% of their production sites will be restored by this summer.

Concerning the procurement of raw materials, components and

CHART 4

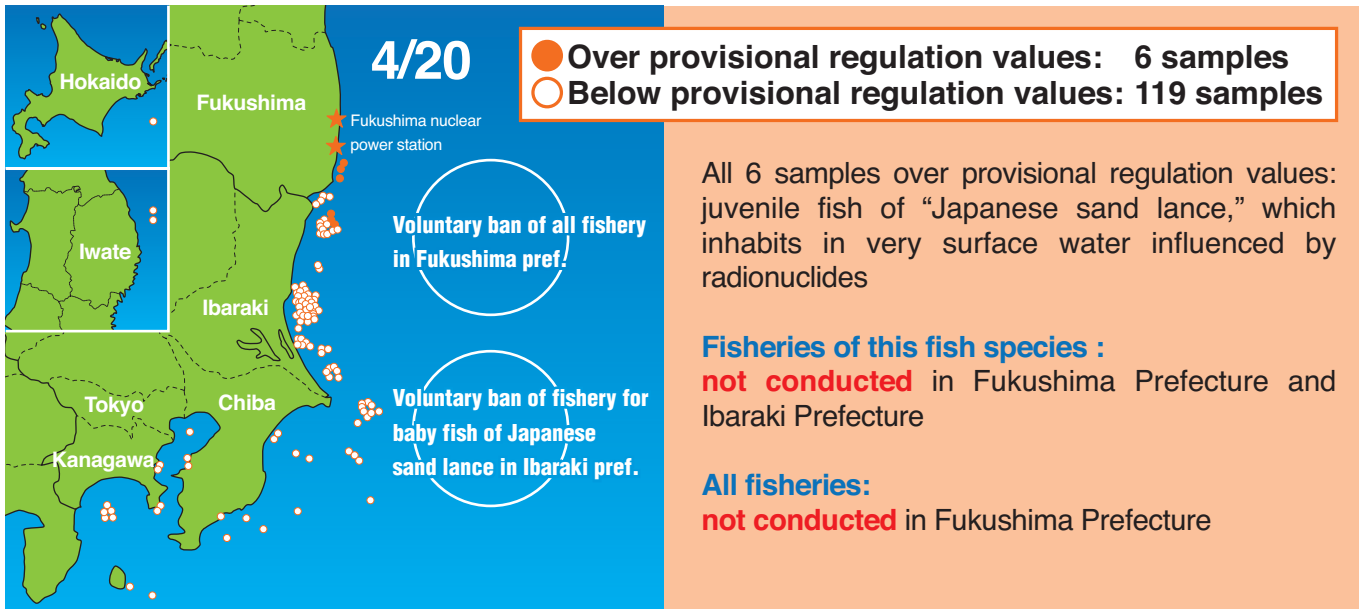
Results of tests on radionuclides in fresh produce



Source: METI

CHART 5

Safety of marine food



Source: METI

parts, 80% of the assembly-makers and more than 60% of the material-makers are now securing those supply chains. Also, 71% of the assembly makers, in responding to METI's questionnaire, believe that they can completely secure procurement of materials and components by October, 2011, whereas 85% of the material-makers believe that they can do so by October, 2011.

This fact sheet means that Japanese manufacturing industries will most likely be restored completely in terms of production as well as supply chain by this fall.

It is to be noted that services and retail industries may suffer seriously from the declining consumption due to the cancellation of events and festivals, in order to show a sign of mourning for the people who died, which could drag business recovery more than the damaged production sites of the manufacturing sector.

Mourning for the people who died in the disaster should be done in a different form than the cancellation of events and festivals such as the celebration of cherry blossoms in April, since the resulting reluctant consumption would only end up torturing the surviving

CHART 6

Safety of drinking water

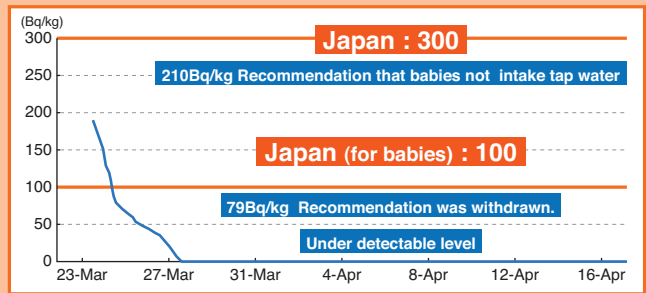
The Japanese Government has been implementing necessary measures based on its stringent criteria for radionuclides in drinking water, and monitoring radionuclide levels every day.

Guidance Levels for Radionuclides in Drinking Water

(Bq/kg)	Japan	EU
radioactive iodine (I131)	300 (for babies) 100	500
radioactive cesium	200	1,000

Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, EURATOM

Radioactive Iodine (I131) in Drinking Water in Tokyo (Kanamachi filter plant)



Bureau of Waterworks, Metropolitan Tokyo Government

*On March 23, the Government of Japan recommended that Tokyo residents refrain from having their babies intake tap water, but it withdrew the recommendation in two days.

Source: METI

CHART 7

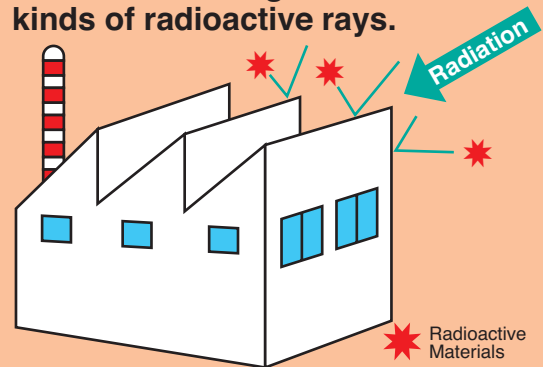
Safety of industrial products

- All factories have suspended operation in the evacuation zone. (20-km-radius and other designated areas)
- Walls and roofs of factories block radioactive materials and rays.
- Fukushima Dai-ichi is located at least 150 km away from Japan's major industrial zones.

All the operating factories are off the evacuation zone.



Concrete buildings block all kinds of radioactive rays.



Source: METI

family members of the deceased, who have also lost their assets and desperately need further economic stimulus through increased consumption.

My French teacher in San Francisco whom I introduced at the beginning of the article often told us, "Travaillez bien, aimez bien, c'est une obligation pour l'homme." In accordance with her words, the best way to show our respect and mourning for the people who died should be "work hard for your mission and love others and do not be egotistic." We should avoid the case where even an

unprecedented earthquake and tsunami could not change our egotism and after all we behave just as self-interested human beings did before the disaster. **JS**

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