

# Japanese Swap Fish for Burgers, Soy Milk on Radiation Contamination Fears

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Mothers receive bottles of water at a distribution office in the Adachi ward of Tokyo on March 24, 2011. Photographer: Haruyoshi Yamaguchi/Bloomberg

Tokyo resident Namiko Murata's children are no longer getting their favorite salmon, saury and mackerel for dinner.

"I'm really paying attention to food because of the radiation problems," said Murata, a mother of three. "We gave up eating fish even though my family likes it very much. Now, for protein, we drink three cups of soy milk a day."

The detection of cobalt, iodine and cesium in the sea near the stricken Fukushima Dai-Ichi nuclear plant north of Tokyo this week hurt fish sales in the world's second-biggest seafood market. Shoppers ignored government reassurances that their food and water supplies were safe even as countries from [Australia](#) to the U.S. restricted food imports from [Japan](#) on fears of radioactive contamination.

Ryoko Mizumoto, a 27-year-old mother of two, said she stopped buying dried Shirasu fish and horse mackerel. "I gave up buying maritime products and started buying cheap meat," she said while lining up to buy bottled water at one of Seven & I Holdings Co.'s Ito-Yokado stores in Tokyo. "I make hamburger steak to replace the fish."

Japan has restricted shipments of milk, spinach and other vegetables from Fukushima and neighboring prefectures as radiation from the plant, damaged on March 11 by the country's strongest earthquake on record, contaminated agricultural products.

## Bottled-Water Shortage

The country's biggest beverage makers, with plants running at full capacity, face renewed pressure to raise bottled-water production as shoppers cleared store shelves following news that radiation contaminated Tokyo's water supply. A [Lawson Inc. \(2651\)](#) convenience store in the capital last night had a sign saying customers could only buy one bottle of water each. Its shelves for water, juice and tea were empty.

The health ministry has tentatively set tolerable levels of radioactivity for each product. For fish, the level is set at 500 Becquerels per kilogram of radioactive cesium and 100 Becquerels per kilogram of uranium. Japan's [Food Safety Commission](#) will assess the standards for possible revision as early as next week.

"We have not received any test results showing fish contaminated by more-than-acceptable levels of radioactivity," Taiju Abe at the health ministry's inspection and safety division said. "Prefectural governments are putting priority on testing vegetables as they are at the highest risk for contamination through the air and rain."

## Some Fishing Halted

Fishing in the northeastern prefectures of Fukushima, Miyagi and Iwate has been halted since the earthquake and the ensuing tsunami that engulfed towns in northeastern Japan, damaged the Fukushima nuclear facility and shook buildings in Tokyo.

The suspension lowered the risk that "tainted fish will be in the market," said Yasuo Sasaki, senior press counselor at the [Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries](#). "We don't see