

Taiwan to submit fishery subsidies draft

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Taiwan, Japan and South Korea will again submit a draft text for eventual disciplines for fisheries subsidies under the World Trade Organization (WTO) framework, Fisheries Administration officials said yesterday.

Unwilling to accept a U.S.-proposed draft text that retains an overall "top-down" broad ban on fisheries subsidies, Taiwan, Japan and South Korea -- all of which have large fishing fleets -- are working to re-submit a joint draft text to facilitate WTO talks on fisheries subsidies, which has been one of the key stumbling blocks in the WTO's Doha round of trade negotiations, the officials said.

Fishing sectors of the three countries decided to re-submit a draft text in the wake of a warm response at a WTO discussion Tuesday in Geneva to the U.S. proposal that suggests a broad ban on fisheries subsidies -- subsidies to help enhance fishing boats' fishing capacities as well as their operational costs, Fisheries Administration officials said.

In addition to Taiwan, Japan and South Korea, Norway and the European Union have also adopted a more conservative stance, considering that a "bottom-up" approach, which proposes that fisheries subsidies be retained first and then identify specific fisheries-related subsidies for prohibition, would be more realistic, according to the officials.

Fishery officials from the three countries have intensively exchanged views on the new "bottom-up" draft text, which will be authored by Japan.

The three countries will also seek support from other WTO member countries for their proposal.

Japan, South Korea and Taiwan elaborated on a "bottom-up" approach in their first submission last year that would identify specific fisheries related subsidies for prohibition, in contrast to the overall ban with negotiated exemptions sought by the Friends of Fish group.