

# In support of Ukedo Port

Shibaei Suisan of Ukedo, Namie Town, Fukushima Prefecture, is a fishery company that mainly engages in processing and wholesale. Since its establishment in 1897, the company has long “progressed” together with the sea of Ukedo. We interviewed Koichi Shiba (84), the third-generation owner, and Tsuyoshi Shiba (56), the fourth-generation owner, for an overview of the company and its efforts toward revitalization. (Team of reporters: Yuki Muroi, freshman at Koriyama High; Yuji Okazaki, 1st year at Koken Junior High; Tomohiro Yusa, 6th grade at Nishibukuro-1 Elementary; Moyu Shimizu, 5th grade at Tomita-higashi Elementary; Masakazu Sato, 5th grade at Hirano Elementary; and Ibuki Kisu, 5th grade at Nakamura-2 Elementary)

## Progressing with the sea

### The meaning behind the title of this newspaper

Since the company building is located close to the sea, we chose the color blue, symbolizing the ocean, and semi-cursive font, which is used in fishing flag. (Yuki Muroi, Moyu Shimizu)

## Paving the Way for Revitalization through Fisheries

### “Fresh fish, nationwide.”



Team members receiving an explanation from Mr. Tsuyoshi Shiba (3rd from the right)

### Shibaei Suisan

Shibaei Suisan's factory and market were completely destroyed by the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. Additionally, because of the nuclear power station accident, evacuation orders were issued and Koichi and his family were forced to leave the area. At one point, he considered resuming his business in another area, but was inspired by the strong requests from the town of Namie and the fishing industry, and decided to restart his business back in his hometown. In April 2020, Koichi and his team restarted Shibaei Suisan with the desire to "restore a place where we can distribute high-end, quality, fresh fish for people to eat again."

Freshness is vital in the fishing industry. In particular, here at Shibaei Suisan, they

take advantage of the fact that it is only two minutes from the port to the company building to ship their products. This allows the processing of fish and shellfish with greater freshness. Especially popular are dried *shirasu* (baby sardines), dried *konago* (young lancefish), and dried *shirauo* (icefish), which can be transported as far north as Hokkaido and south to Hyogo. Eleven years after the earthquake, the area is still very popular with people from all over Japan.

Shibaei Suisan focuses on processing, utilizing one of the few machines in Japan that can process seafood from washing and steaming in one process. The technology used in the processing line is very current. Although there are many problems, such as the small number of fishermen and harmful rumors, Shibaei Suisan still continues to take on challenges, listening to the voices of the people of Namie Town who need their help.

## Overcoming difficulties to rebuild Interview with senior and junior Mr. Shiba

Q: What are the strengths of Shibaei Suisan?

A: Our technology to provide delicious products is second to none, as it allows for processing while maintaining freshness. The machine used mainly for processing *shirasu* (baby sardines), which was introduced during the reconstruction, is one of the best processing machines in Japan, directly connecting the processes from washing to steaming. It can make four tons per hour. Another advantage is the location of the plant, which is only two minutes from the port to the plant.

Q: What made you decide to restart the business?

A: Actually, I wasn't sure if I wanted to resume again. However, I also felt that it would be a waste to keep such high-quality fish out of the market just because "there was an earthquake" or "the buildings were washed away". At the same time, there were demands from customers to have fish from Ukedo available at supermarkets, so we decided to reopen the business. Our company was covered extensively in the trade press, and we were inundated with calls from our pre-earthquake clients in Kyoto and Nagoya. I was very happy to hear that once they used Shibaei's fish, they could no longer use anybody else's fish.

Q: What are your dreams and prospects for the future?

A: I want people to come back to Namie Town and taste the delicious fish. Fishermen evacuated at the time of the earthquake, and the number of fishing boats is still about one-third of what it was before the disaster. I hope that the number of new workers will gradually increase.



Koichi (3rd from right) and Tsuyoshi (4th from right) being interviewed.



View of the reconstructed Shibaei Suisan

### Editorial Note

I was able to receive their earnest thoughts.

(Yuki Muroi)

I was deeply touched by their passion for revitalization.

(Yuji Okazaki)

I thought it was impressive that the company was so close to the port and the fish was so fresh.

(Tomohiro Yusa)

I learned a lot about the current state of revitalization following the earthquake.

(Moyu Shimizu)

Touching a live fish for the first time in my life left a strong impression on me. (Masakazu Sato)

I thought it was great to make products that you can feel safe to eat. (Ibuki Kisu)