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**“Our products are developed rooted in Japanese culture, and we have always been mindful of both performance and safety.”**

**Michiko Kamihata**  
CEO, Kamihata Fish Industry Group



# GROWING CLOSER TO NATURE THROUGH ORNAMENTAL FISH

KAMIHATA FISH INDUSTRIES PROVIDES NOURISHING FOOD FOR JAPAN’S GROWING ORNAMENTAL FISH INDUSTRY, BRINGING A FOCUS ON QUALITY AND SAFETY FOR PEOPLE’S BELOVED PETS. *By Daniel de Bomford, Cian O’Neill and Paul Mannion*



Ornamental fish like the famous koi are closely tied into Japanese culture. Its beauty and colors are evocative of Japanese aesthetic traditions. They exist throughout Japanese folklore and symbolize hard work and perseverance, like the carp who climbed the waterfall and was transformed into a dragon. Bred carefully for centuries, they are almost living works of art. President Michiko Kamihata of Kamihata Fish Industry Group, a Japanese market leader in all things ornamental fish, have been raising Koi for over 140 years in Japan and currently produces and sells Hikari®, a world-class brand of Nishikigoi and other ornamental fish foods.



**A Deeply Japanese Cultural Export**  
Ornamental fish culture has evolved throughout the centuries and through selective breeding the iconic beauty of fish like the Nishikigoi became closely entwined with perceptions of Japanese culture, both at home and abroad. “I believe that the unique nature of Japanese ornamental fish breeding, rooted in this Japanese culture, and the insatiable pursuit of beauty in harmony with nature, is what makes Japan unique,” Ms. Kamihata says. Because of these associations with beauty and art, Japan has become the world leader in exporting ornamental fish. This export market is recognized by the Japanese government which has labeled the industry as one of the country’s “priority export commodities.” Ms. Kamihata compares it to the famous wagyu beef, another important export commodity. Hikari® has been able to use Japan’s reputation around koi and its high-quality products to succeed domestically and internationally, exporting to over 70 countries. Ms. Kamihata describes how people are captivated by koi and come to Japan to witness the breeding and care of the fish and bring them home. With sales doubling in the last decade Hikari® positions itself as a company that understands koi care and those that care for the fish want the best products. “We strive to develop products that are truly needed by the people who raise, sell, and breed ornamental fish, as well as the fish themselves,” she explains.

Through its Hikari® brand, Kamihata strives to create food that facilitates healthy and beautiful growth. Because of the variety of ornamental fish breeds and life stages, Hikari® have built an impressive catalogue. “When it comes to ornamental fish food, we have about 300 different formulas, or recipes,” she says.

**Kamihata’s unparalleled advantage**

Kamihata maintains a strategic edge with its factories which allow it to innovate and iterate new products very quickly. It is able to test its products on fish farms and import centers of its group company Kamihata Fish Industry. “Through this process, our products are improved on a daily basis, and we are able to deliver even better products to our customers,” Ms. Kamihata says. In an effort to preserve fish species, Kamihata established a fish breeding business, and has had success breeding in famously difficult fish, such as the black banded angelfish. With regulations on fish breeding tightening around the world for environmental protection, Kamihata’s careful program is an opportunity to connect people with pets. Ms. Kamihata says that pets play an important part in nurturing



a love for nature. “We place significant importance on living with and loving nature,” she explains. Ms. Kamihata describes how Kamihata’s passionate technicians love fish and that has been an important part of their success.

**Healthcare For Pets Is Healthcare for Family**

Koi—like cats and dogs—are more than just pets to many and are part of the family. Ms. Kamihata describes it is for that reason, Hikari® maintains such a high standard of safety for its products. “Our products are produced and managed directly in our own factories, and as a result, we were the first ornamental fish food manufacturing plant in Japan to acquire ISO 22000 certification,” she says. Its products, trusted by champion breeders both nourish and care for the health of the fish. Ms. Kamihata says that their product Saki-Hikari® was the world’s first probiotic food for ornamental fish and raised the standard for koi raising requirements. Hikari-Germ™ are live bacteria which helps improve the koi’s digestion, absorption and growth, break down feces to control water pollution, suppress pathogens to help reduce susceptibility to disease, and help maintain Koi’s health and immunity. Beyond probiotics, Kamihata are developing new foods that contain an herb mixture to help support koi health. Through @Hikari’s high-quality, it has garnered an enviable reputation. Its main international markets of the USA, Europe and Southeast Asia continue to grow, and it is always on the look-out for new partners. Its overseas growth isn’t only to serve sales but increase Hikari® brand awareness and establish it as a global brand. Having established a factory in Indonesia to localize the production of frozen food, cultural significance of ornamental fish in Japan continues to captivate enthusiasts worldwide, with companies like Kamihata leading the way. Its unmatched standards of safety and respect for the fish preserves these aquatic treasures. Ms. Kamihata explains, “We consider how we can provide people with beautiful fish that coexist with nature.”