

FOREWORD

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The demand environment for construction materials has shown a strong trend in recent years, but demand was sluggish during fiscal year 2020 due to the effects of the novel coronavirus. In spite of this downturn, a gradual recovery of demand is expected, centering on replacement of aging infrastructure, policies aimed at building a strong, resilient country against natural disasters and urban redevelopment, and firm demand is anticipated in the mid- and long-term. Thus, it is important to develop technologies and products that respond to social conditions, and to work to ensure a stable supply of those products.

JFE Steel's Shape Steel Division produces steel products that support social infrastructure, particularly in the construction, civil engineering, shipbuilding and railroad fields, at two production bases, the Shape Mill at Kurashiki District and the Shape Mill at Fukuyama District, both of which are part of West Japan Works. Taking advantage of the features of these respective mills, the company produces various types of shape steel, with production centering on large section H-shapes and steel sheet piles at Kurashiki and steel shapes for shipbuilding and railroad rails at Fukuyama. Since some products can also be produced at both mills, this is a flexible production system that can respond to changing needs in the sales environment.

This "Special Issue on Construction Materials" introduces equipment improvements aimed at increasing capacity and improving quality at the Kurashiki and Fukuyama Shape Mills, together with original JFE products and construction methods.

At present, there are heightened needs for products that contribute to a strong, resilient country (higher strength, larger section, etc.) in response to increasingly severe natural disasters, and labor saving and efficiency in work at construction sites (hat-shaped steel sheet pile, etc.) to cope with labor shortages. To address these social needs, JFE Steel completed a series of investments to stabilize production and increase production capacity at the Kurashiki Shape Mill, including strengthening the intermediate mills of the sheet pile production line, revamping heating furnaces, introduction of a large-scale press, etc., and at the Fukuyama Shape Mill, we have actively invested in quality improvement, as seen in the

improvement work for high quality rails and the introduction of automatic measuring devices.

In product development and application development for original JFE products, we developed a new straight-shaped steel sheet pile, J Flat Pile[®], featuring an improved joint and a 14% lighter unit weight than the conventional product, together with processed products using J Flat Pile[®], and are promoting expanded application of the high strength fixed outer dimensions H-shape HBL[®]-H355. As another example of technology development and product development that responds to the needs of customers, we have also developed new applications for Stripe HTM, which features stripe-shaped protuberances on the outer flange surface to improve adhesion with concrete, in addition to the conventional construction methods.

Although we anticipate a continuing difficult sales environment, JFE Steel will also supply products that meet customer requirements and social needs in the future. We sincerely request your guidance and support for these efforts.