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Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

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Dear Our Readers:

Here are four topics that we would like to share with you as follows:

1. MEL Certification Updates

Four certifications (one fishery, one aquaculture, and two CoC) were issued this month. The total number of certifications is 51 (4 fishery, 23 aquaculture and 25 CoC). We continuously receive application requests for MEL certification; certification bodies have resumed assessment work and audit visit since May 15th after their voluntary suspension due to the virus problem.

2. MEL V-1 and V-2

Separating the logo of V-1 and V-2 is steadily implemented thanks to certification holders' cooperation, which was required by GSSI when MEL gained its recognition. According to our interview survey, 13 cases of V-1 and 11 of V-2 are reported so far. It covers most of the logos which are currently distributed in the marketplace. We expect this number is growing steadily. We continue following up with that to avoid consumers' confusion and enhance global trust.

3. Voice from Certified Entities

We would like to introduce a report from Mr. Hiroyasu Ito, a chairman of Chuo Gyorui Co., Ltd. and chairman of Toyosu Market Association, to you. He talks about what is happening at Toyosu Fish Market now.

"Current Situation at Toyosu"

Coronavirus outbreak is spreading even at a wholesale market. The followings are current Toyosu Fish Market's volume and sales:

	Volume (vs. LY)	Sales (vs. LY)
Feb 2020	26,883MT (+2.65%)	26,756 Mil. (-1.37%)
Mar 2020	28,906MT (-4.31%)	26,182 Mil. (-16.15%)
Apr 2020	26,530MT (-14.10%)	20,989 Mil. (-33.83%)
MT = Metric Ton, Mil. = Million JPY		

In March, because of remote working and voluntary restraint from going-out, cargo movement suddenly got worsen. Most of companies prepared for the fiscal year end at the end of March; unlike the last eleven months, the outcome in March plummeted sharply same as other businesses. Even worse, it got into crisis situation in April.



Toyosu Fish Market Middle Traders Corridor

With regard to customer base, retailers show good performance thanks to demand increase of home-cooking and taking-in. However, food service sector, particularly, high-end restaurants got in devastating situation. Frozen, dried and salted and fresh fish at retailers' seafood counters look better, but some species, like live fish or sea urchin, for high-end Sushi restaurants, show 20 percent down versus the same time last year. Although depending on business channels, performance of middle-trader (Naka Oroshi) shows down by 60% or even 70%, so to speak, like "open but no business at all". They were in the center of serious business crisis never been experienced before.

Since the beginning of May, besides recovery of fresh fish air cargo to China, consumption increase of frozen salmon and amazing growth of e-commerce featuring "Direct Delivery from Toyosu", we feel the mood is changing a little bit - maybe resulting from relaxed feeling after lifting of the state of emergency. Anyhow, I am paying attention to the number at the end of May.

Wrote by Mr. Hiroyasu Ito

4. Column

We are glad to introduce Mr. Mitsunori Yoshida, a president of Japan Overseas Fishing Association, to you as the second columnist. Mr. Yoshida is a supervisor of MEL Council. He gives us an interesting topic as to how the virus was impacting on pelagic fishery operation.

"Japan's Pelagic Fishery against Coronavirus"

There are 219 pelagic fishing vessels in Japan including trawl, tuna longline or purse seine - we are directly facing difficulty by the coronavirus pandemic.

Now all countries are de facto isolation or close-door. We have to have vessels moored at overseas harbors such as in Africa or Pacific Islands due to lockdown, restriction of immigration entry and prohibition of getting in and out from the ship. Because of that, fishery vessels under the shut-down cannot gain any income and get in extremely severe condition.

In order to resume operation, each fishery company is gathering information about each country's policies against the virus issue, taking measures with all parties concerned, and securing crews' safety. Catches of pelagic fishery mainly operating on the high seas are loaded at overseas harbors, and then shipped to Japan or other countries. Yet, we are facing problems like restriction of unloading or uncertain logistics.

As a part of pelagic fishery industry, we hope fresh and safe catches of fish would be brought to consumers' tables all of the world after the end of this crisis as early as possible.

Wrote by Mr. Misunori Yoshida



Tomi-Maru No.58 moored at Diego Suarez Harbor, Madagascar

POSTSCRIPT

It was reported that the total volume combined with six wholesalers at Toyosu in April was down by 66% versus the same time frame of last year - an unprecedented difficulty never before seen. On the other hand, supermarket or retailer (food sector) is very active sustained by increase of household demand. It reflects the difference from that of food service segment. Mr. Ito and Mr. Yoshida's columns are very interesting. Both share virus problem's impact on our seafood supply chain: fish market and overseas fishery.

We are keeping mind to support certified partners. In particular, we receive some inquiries about transition from the old to new MEL and usages of both. As the V-1 logo will be expired at the end of January 2011, we sincerely take care of this matter, please contact us at any time.

The number of infections is getting decreased, the state of emergency in Japan was lifted. We would expect the economy comes back to the normal. But, remember, we are still under an unpredictable situation. Please follow social norms and stay safe!

If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact MEL Council Secretariat; we are happy to hear that.

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