

July 31st, 2020

Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

MEL NEWS VOL. 28 (ENGLISH EDITION)

Dear Our Readers:

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

1. MEL Certification Updates

Eight certifications (one fishery, four aquaculture, and three CoC) were issued this month. The total number of certifications is 62 (5 fishery, 29 aquaculture and 28 CoC). Because the coronavirus spread is not so severe in the countryside comparing to Tokyo or other big cities, auditors and applicants of certification – including annual audit – are communicating each other smoothly; most auditors and fishing or aquafarm sites are located outside of big cities.

2. Certification Ceremony

Although 35 certifications had been issued since the last ceremony, due to the coronavirus outbreak, the certificate presentation ceremony was postponed. Finally, it was held on July 17th. We reserved a relatively big hall in order to keep social distance. Unfortunately, some certified entities could not make a travel over to Tokyo.

10 representatives spoke of expression of declaration and commitment toward sustainable seafood industry. Mr. Hidetoshi Hattori of Hattori Suisan, amberjack/Hamachi aquafarmer in Kagawa Prefecture, sent a letter of declaration to MEL Council. Although he could not attend the ceremony, his strong passion and pride for aqua-business and sustainability highly moved us.



Certification Ceremony at Ishigaki Memorial Hall on Fri, July 17th, 2020

3. Voice from Certified Entities

We would like to introduce a letter from Mr. Motohiro Kikuchi, Vice President of Representative Director of Hokkaido Federation of Fisheries Cooperative Associations. He talks about engagement and activities to protect bountiful sea and nature.

“Protect Bountiful Sea”

“Life below Water” or “Protect Bountiful Sea” is one of the goals of SDGs, which was adopted by United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in 2015. The sea is a way to make a living for fishermen, and protection of marine ecosystem is the cornerstone to run sustainable fisheries and transform it into a growth industry.

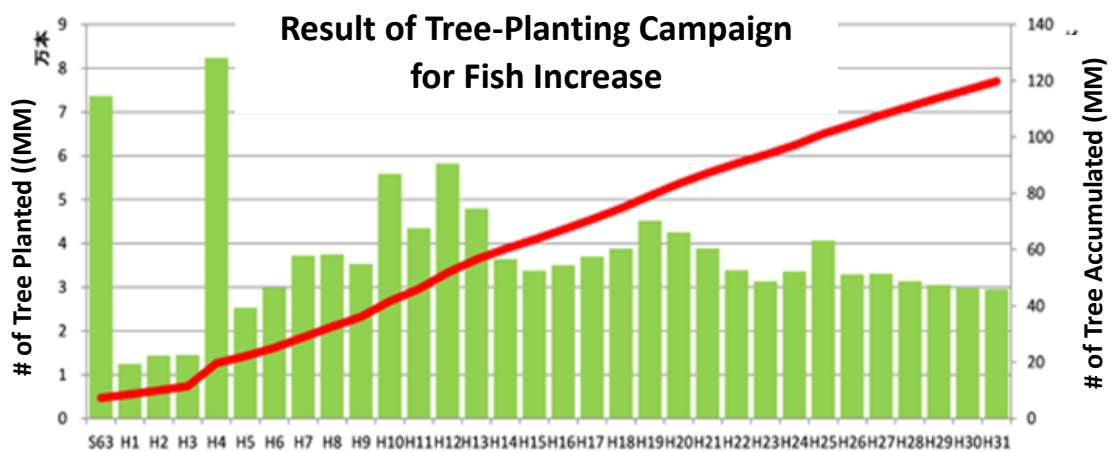
Since 1988, initiated by the female group of Fisheries Cooperative in Hokkaido, we have been operating the program called “Tree-Planting Campaign for Fish Increase.” Now, the circle of program has been enlarging. Cooperating with fishery, agriculture and consumer organizations and collaborating with related parties in forest industry, there are around 1.2 million plant-trees accumulated as of today.

Here, we would like to deliver our message; from the forest to sea, and then back to the forest, along with great natural circulation, nurture rich sea and forest in Hokkaido, protect secure and safe food environment and restore natural beach back to 100 years continuing effort on taking another 100 years.

The set-net fishery of Chum Salmon in Hokkaido gained MEL fishery Certification (V2) in March 2020. Our affiliated companies gained CoC certification after then. We are glad to hear that some of seafood processors in Hokkaido have start preparing for the certification. Considering processing and distribution of Chum Salmon, we think we need to have overseas processing sites with MEL certification and build a global supply chain despite anxiety of the pandemic. As Ito-Yokado obtained CoC certification for all branches in April, we highly expect, using this as an opportunity, MEL’s recognition and prevalence will become much stronger surely.

Our fishermen take pride of their works - catching and unloading fish, focusing on quality and freshness – backed by rich resources and nature in Hokkaido. I would like to change the meaning of “Chum Salmon” to a kind of “pride” supported by the marine certification originated from Japan and recognized globally, under Tairyō Bata or fishing boat flag.

Written by Mr. Motohiro Kikuchi



4. Column

We are glad to introduce Mr. Toshihiro Omori, a representative executive director of JF Zengyoren. JF Zengyoren is a national wide federation of JF (Japan Fisheries Cooperative) organized by fishers in local areas. Mr. Omori retired from the position of director of MEL Council last month. Since its foundation, he had made many contributions to MEL. This time, he gave us a message about significance of marine eco-label from Fisheries Cooperative Associations standpoint.

“Hope for MEL’s Further Success”

The prolonged coronavirus and its impact strike a serious big blow to fishermen in Japan, JF Group’s processing and fishery management. We made a strong request for the government and the ruling parties about countermeasure against the coronavirus. The government has taken all steps necessary for the fishing industry to survive by the supplementary budgets formulated in April and June. We have to get through the difficulty taking advantage of such support programs. On the other hand, considering its world-wide outbreak, we seriously need to develop drastic medical solution to eliminate the coronavirus.



Mr. Toshihiro Omori

I was assigned as a director of MEL Council in 2016 when it was incorporated pursuing the global standard. There are only two organization members; Japan Fisheries Association and JF Zengyoren. It was exactly from scratch - I still remember... Since then, strengthening management system, increasing the number of membership and handling with reality of Japan’s fishing industry covering a wide variety of species, MEL Council gained GSSI certification as the first marine eco-label schemes in Asia, which, I believe, was resulted from related people’s amazing efforts and passions.

As a representative of JF Zengyoren or National Federation of JFs, I believe that active and

continuous approach to protect marine resources and ecosystem through MEL implementation should be the cornerstone toward sustainable development of Japan's fishing industry in future years. And it is another big mission that we should create "mutual awareness" sharing with fishermen and seafood consumers in Japan.

I resigned from the position of director of MEL Council, though. As one of the related parties, I am hoping for MEL's further success and development: the world-class marine eco-label scheme contributing to enhancement of global evaluation on Japan's marine products.

Written by Mr. Toshihiro Omori

POSTSCRIPT

We must maintain a supply chain (chain of custody) of MEL-certified Hokkaido Chum Salmon, which we can call a crystal of related parties' efforts and passions, from a fishing ground to dining table. And we do follow up with Hokkaido Federation of Fisheries Cooperative Association for overseas processing site to get MEL CoC certification. We keep working on it.

Without a spirit of "mutual awareness," MEL cannot provide all fishermen and societies with beneficial accomplishment. Again, we would appreciate all the support Omori-san has given us.

Charge for plastic shopping bag has just started since the first day of this month, which means that we have entered into an age of plastic-free society. There are many benefits in the fishing industry from that like ropes, nets, buoys, containers and boxes; we need to take firm stand against this issue.

We should focus on challenges to be taken actions toward human future, not getting swayed by the coronavirus outbreak. Let's keep doing self-control, and protect business sustainability.

If you have any comments or suggestion, feel free to send to us!

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