

August 31st, 2020

Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

MEL NEWS VOL. 29 (ENGLISH EDITION)

Dear Our Readers:

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

1. MEL Certification Updates

Four certifications (3 aquaculture and 1 CoC) were issued this month. The total number of certifications is 63 (5 fishery, 30 aquaculture and 28 CoC) by the end of Aug 2020. Yonkyu's Kingfish, Stripe Jack Mackerel and Amberjack gained the aquaculture certification, and Ishikawa Chuo Fish Market gained CoC certification. Ishikawa Chuo is located in Kanazawa, one of Japan's most historic and well-preserved cities.

2. Auditors Training Program

We held an auditors training program on 29th and 30th July. It is technically referred to as Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and designed to secure the competence of auditors and maintain their qualification. From this time, MEL Council organized the program, which is as it should be, and enhanced its quality with the help of the



Training Facility maintains social distancing.

scientists of Experts Committee, Technofer Ltd., an education and consulting service firm, and JFRCA (Japan Fisheries Resource Conservation Association) as a Certification Body (CB). Besides remote lecture system, we cared about keeping social distancing between each attendee, and set a vinyl screen in a room.

The two-day course run from 9:00AM to 9:00PM, compacted many contents, and gave an exam of each subject: fisheries, aquaculture and chain of custody. We consider it more valuable because of being able to share recent MEL's trend with auditors. We will continuously make effort to brush it up - thank for all those involved in the training program.

3. Voice from Certified Entities

We would like to introduce a message from Mr. Kouichi Inoue, General Manager of Marche Department of Ito-Yokado Co., Ltd. He shares his view of marine eco-label concept from retailer standpoint.

“Marine Ecolabel from Retailer”

Ito-Yokado gained the MEL CoC certification as the first case in major retailers in Japan, which we receive evaluation and admiration from those who belong to seafood division of the group companies and CSR-related division inside of fisheries industry. However, I honestly see there is little interest in the certification from people of other divisions, or sales reps of seafood companies and fish markets.

They are one of the consumers so that we should create a trigger to lead them to the idea of sustainability, which, I believe, is retailer’s mission and role. But, it is very challenging. How comes? It goes without saying that fish in Japan, fish processed in Japan and imported fish by Japanese companies give a sense of safety compared to meats or produces. It is such an unconscious factor. Then what? Maybe consumers feel like this way... In fact, because of consumer’s critical eyes, no goods on shelf give us any doubt in the modern retail industry. Among that, it is hard to convince consumers that the fish certification is valuable.

However, we have around 20-year experience to build the private label of “Seafood with a Producer’s Face” which does not boast of pricing. In order to move up the private-labeled seafood lines and promote fish eating activities with safety and sustainability mind toward the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, which has been postponed to the next year though; we decided to gain the MEL CoC Certification. We believe that it is our mission to promote recognition of the certification originated from Japan via our shops (real and online) collaborating with wild-catch and aquaculture producers.

Lastly, if each of us has serious passion to do help those who are unfamiliar with the sustainability or eco-label understand, participate in, and inherit, we could see a bright future in the fisheries industry. This is exactly one of the critical missions in our company. Please support us since we will continuously move forward and expand this program more than now.

Written by Mr. Kouichi Inoue



Fresh Seafood Counter at Ito-Yokado featuring MEL-certified Fish Packs

4. Column

We are glad to introduce Ms. Yuriko Shiraishi, a representative at Women's Forum for Fish (WWF). WWF is a non-profit organization founded in 1993. It hosts symposiums, lectures, workshops and events related to fisheries and fish-eating culture involved with producers, administrations, scientists, and consumers. There are 2,000 members of not only in Japan but overseas as well.



Ms. Yuriko Shiraishi

"MEL Japan, It's Time to Send a Message"

MEL Japan gained GSSI Recognition in December 2019 through involved people's hard work and efforts. It is an epoch-making incident and big progress, which I congratulate on that from bottom of my heart. But, who should I tell? Unless consumers recognize a marine eco-label, it does not create a value. Unless people know the MEL, producers' effort on fisheries resource management will not pay off.

I believe it is the time to send a message of significance of MEL. Since retailers and distributors acknowledge MEL's presence, MEL-certified fish is reached to the consumers finally. We expect MEL Japan needs to think of public relations strategy and put all energies on enhancing organization capabilities for that.

There are many things to do without the budget. For



Kids reporters of the program called
"We are the Child of the Sea"

instance, how about working closely with relevant organizations' homepage or public relation activities. MAFF or Fisheries Agency is enhancing remote program and developing their website for children. It looks a good idea that children enjoy an experiment at home through a learning video tool. MEL Japan needs a passion to do everything of public communication. This year is the thirteenth since MEL was founded. It is the time to become the meaningful certification for the people, again I strongly believe that.

Written by Ms. Yuriko Shiraishi

POSTSCRIPT

It is so impressed by Inoue-san's message that we could see a bright future in the fisheries industry if we seriously commit on sustainability. Now, we reply to consumers as to where to buy MEL-certified fish. It is very motivating for producers definitely. Shiraishi-san has helped a lot for MEL Japan since its foundation. Her message that the marine ecolabel is valuable once it is recognized by consumers in the right direction. Thank you so much.

The emergency measure against the virus outbreak has been introduced individually by major cities and prefecture governments. Coronavirus control and economic recovery are inextricably linked each other. But, judging from a plunge in GDP, it looks very tough to strike a balance of both. The lingering summer heat is intense, we wish you good health.

If you have any comments or suggestions, feel free to let us know!

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