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Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

## MEL NEWS VOL. 33 (ENGLISH EDITION)

Dear our partners:

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

### 1. MEL Certification Updates

This month's new certifications were one for fishery, five for aquaculture, and two for CoC, which the total was eight cases. The cumulative total is 83 certifications (6 fisheries, 35 aquaculture, and 42 CoC). Amid the coronavirus outbreak, we would like to thank everyone involved for their earnest efforts.

It should be noted that, in this month's fishery certification, the Shijimi freshwater clam fishery of Jusan Fisheries Cooperative in Aomori Prefecture was certified as the first transition from the old MEL (V1) to the new MEL (V2). We would like to pay tribute to everyone under Mr. Kudo, the head of Jusan Cooperative, for their tenacious efforts. Regarding the stock, a peer reviewer indicated that 30-year catch statistics could be used to estimate stock dynamics to make more scientifically valid decisions. Fishery of Shijimi freshwater clam in Lake Jusan is a small-scale fishery with the catch of 1,095 tons last year. Yet, in addition to voluntary management system by fishermen, the supply chain of MEL certification to consumers will be completed through the certified entities who gained CoC certification.

### 2. Members Recruitment in 2020

This year, due to the coronavirus outbreak, we have refrained from recruiting the members, but in June the Mie Prefectural Federation of Fisheries Cooperative Associations (Mie Gyoren) and in December Japan Far Seas Purse Seine Fishing Association (KAIMAKI JAPAN) became the membe. The total number is 42 (41 full members and 1 supporting



MEL's Member Companies' Logo

member). We would like to express our deep gratitude to all members for their understanding of sustainable use of marine resources and for their support for the MEL Japan Council.

### 3. Voice from Certified Entities

This month, Mr. Masahiro Izumida, President of Kurose Suisan Co., Ltd. in Miyazaki Prefecture, reported on the recent situation of Yellowtail (*Seriola quinqueradiata*) aquaculture industry undergoing various challenges due to the coronavirus outbreak.

*“As a Yellowtail farmer”*

*We culture Yellowtail off the coast of Miyazaki prefecture, Southeast of Kyusyu Island. One of our major strengths is an ability to supply fresh and fatty fish year-round with hatchery-raised seedling. For the past few years, we have been working to expand exports mainly in East Asia and Europe with the goal of delivering Kurose-branded fish in the world.*



Fresh Kurose Yellowtail (Buri) Round

*While steadily increasing exports, I feel that customers have become more interested in “corporate responsibility” as the SDGs are permeating our society. Not only the work environment and compliance with laws and regulations, but also the attitude toward the environment and resources has become a critical factor in determining whether or not a company is an appropriate business partner. The policy of SDGs is common to international environmental certifications such as MEL and ASC. Through acquisition of both certifications, Kurose Suisan has built a system that can fulfill our “corporate responsibility,” which enables us to meet customers’ needs. As such, these certifications are necessary for the globalized product of Yellowtail.*

*However, certified products have problems in terms of production and sales. On the production side, the bottleneck is that the internationally required standards deviate from the laws and standards in Japan to some extent. Therefore, we are looking for ways to fill this through participating in the activities of the Japan Seriola Initiative (JSI). On the sales side, although companies are looking for ways to use MEL as a marketing tool to further increase exports, the current situation is that corporate customers like a foodservice sector show interest, but consumers do not. In fact, consumers are less interested outside Europe and do not accept it as an added value.*

*This may be true for environmental certification or marine eco-label in general, but I look*

*forward to MEL's future activities so that the certification that we, as the aquaculture companies, have gained will be more useful. There is no doubt that global environmental certification will be necessary for the fishing industry in the future. We will continue to aim for sustainable aquaculture industry, for the fishing industry and for our own prosperity in the future.*

*Written by Mr. Masahiro Izumida*

#### **4. Column**

This month, we asked Mr. Nobuyuki Itagaki, the former NHK commentator, who is instructing us as an economic journalist on the MEL Japan Council's advisory board.

*"Japan, Ignorant of Sustainability?"*

*I have to feel that Japan is a society that is ignorant of "sustainability" in various fields. After more than 40 years of experience as a reporter and commentator, various past cases that made me keenly aware of this come to my mind: for instance, in Gifu Prefecture to which I was appointed at first, the destruction of nature by creating a river mouth weir on the Nagara River, a first-class river without a dam, in the name of securing industrial water in the Chukyo area. In Ishikawa Prefecture, where I worked for the second transfer, a forcible construction of nuclear power plant in the Noto Peninsula, and neighboring Fukui Prefecture, a centralized location called "Nuclear Power Plant Ginza."*



**Mr. Nobuyuki Itagaki**

*Despite strong opposition, neither could become a big public opinion before economic priority, and the discussion of "sustainability" with an eye on the future of the environment and energy did not proceed. I would think, that led to the Fukushima nuclear disaster. However, this was also the time when the sprouting of sustainability was born. In 1983, I visited Hokkaido to create a special TV program featuring nationwide cutting-edge industries; early attempts at solar power generation had begun.*

*When I returned to Tokyo after working in the countryside for seven years and became in charge of the former Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, I encouraged establishing the first subsidy scheme to promote this technology. However, the subsidy was recognized as insignificant compared to the budget for nuclear power plants, and the technology and location in this field, which was the most advanced in the world at that time, was suddenly braked due to the emphasis on nuclear power program, and is being*

*overtaken by China and Germany these days.*

*Under these circumstances, there was a movement in the fishery sector. In 1984, when I was in charge of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the US-Japan whaling friction broke out. The United States insisted on whaling ban because whales are valuable in higher organisms, Japan said that whaling is a traditional industry and culture, which should be discussed on a scientific basis in order to maintain the ecosystem. The conflict was not able to solve. With the last commercial whaling ship heading from the port of Yokosuka to the Southern Ocean, there was a bittersweet memory that I reported live on the top news of the day. Since then, Japan has continued to explore the path of "from catching fisheries to growing fisheries." Although its diplomacy is heading toward sustainability, Japan has not taken any effective steps, amid the problems of illegal operations and overfishing by other countries in the waters near Japan.*

*I feel strongly that sustainability is not just about living things and the natural environment, but a question in economics and corporate management. We saw the "bubble economy (1986-91)" created by monetary easing and fiscal mobilization without thinking about the future and its collapse. The Japanese economy lost its way for a long time due to the loss of management sustainability and a series of corporate bankruptcies. The "Abenomics bubble" depending on stock prices, is created by the super-monetary easing and fiscal stimulus by debt, which is the gold sign of LDP's retuning to the power. The performance has little sense of real economic recovery and makes us concerned about the road we have been before.*

*With Japan's worst fiscal deterioration in developed countries and the Bank of Japan's bizarre monetary policy that has stepped into negative interest rates, there would be no fragment of long-term fiscal and financial prospects and sustainability. Of particular concern is the sustainability of the medical system in the corona epidemic. As medical expenses have been cut down to prevent financial deterioration resulted from repeated fiscal mobilization, there is a shortage of facilities, doctors and nurses, and dealing with the increase in patients is an urgent issue above all.*

*The efforts of the Marine Eco-label Japan Council seek the sustainability of fishery industry, not just product differentiation. But, by asking ourselves for these ideas in various fields of Japan society, the question is now whether it could be made.*

*Written by Mr. Nobuyuki Itagaki*

## **POSTSCRIPT**

The year of 2020, when the world is swayed by the coronavirus pandemic, is about to end

without a clear path to its exit. It is a similar unwelcome topic though, a really tough is continuing for Japan's fishery industry. We worry that the fishery volume has been pushed to the point where it may fall below four million metric tons.

In her Christmas message, Queen Elizabeth II's referred to 1992 as "annus horribilis," a Latin phrase meaning horrible year. Almost 30 years have passed since then. We hope that the next year will be "annus mirabilis," which means wonderful year in Latin. We hope you all have a good year.

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

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