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Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

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Dear Our Partners:

A happy new year, hope all is well with you. As predicted by Professor Hiroshi Nishiura of Kyoto University, based on the theory of "effective reproduction number," the covid-19 infection was spreading and the second state of emergency was announced. The impact on all production, sales and processing of fishing industry is enormous.

Aside from vaccines, it is frustrated that there is no control other than reducing human-to-human contact. While movement for diversity has been spreading since the new year, the media is enthusiastic about decarbonization and prominent tone of DX (digital transformation). Also, under "Food Tech (technological innovation in the food and food industry)," it is likely that the year of 2021 will be the year when technological innovation becomes apparent as a new trend to change "food."

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

1. Status of MEL Certification

The certification in January was 2 CoCs. The old MEL certification is suspended at the end of January. The total of 28 cases - 10 fisheries and 18 CoC - have been expired. As we had already informed in writing, the logo will no longer be available to those who had obtained the old MEL certification. On the other hand, for those who obtained the new MEL certification, "V2" logo on a product will be unnecessary from February 1st. Some of the entities are transitioning to the new MEL; 11 fisheries and 11 CoC are under assessment or consulting. We would like to express our sincere gratitude for their contribution to penetration of the marine eco-label in Japan.

By the end of year of 2020, the number of certifications is 6 for fishery, 35 for aquaculture and CoC for 42, the total is 83. We reviewed certification trend by regions. Among 47 prefectures, 24 show one or more certifications, 23 shows no certifications (3 are inland region). Among the 23 prefectures showing zero certification, 4 are applying and preparing for application (Chiba, Toyama, Hyogo and Nagasaki) and other 4 have companies or organization in the process of

consulting. The top five fishery ports sorted by landing volume in 2019 are: #1, Choshi of 280,000MT, #2, Kushiro of 172,000MT, #3, Yaizu of 171,000MT, #4, Nagasaki of 101,000MT and #5 Ishinomaki of 100,000MT. Among them, Choshi, Kushiro, Nagasaki and Ishinomaki have no MEL certified entities. MEL Council held a workshop in Kushiro, Ishinomaki and Nagasaki though.

We have pointed out the bias in gaining certification and have taken actions for some time, but unfortunately the results have not been achieved. Three workshops have been determined in the first quarter of 2021, and inquiry from individual companies and organizations are increasing. However, as mentioned previously, there are about half of the prefectures with “zero” acquisitions, and still “zero” certified entities at major fishing ports, which shows a bias in interest in marine eco-label. We will be able to correct that through various approaches for the new era after covid-19.

2. Participation on Event

Event or exhibition is not active due to the current situation, but various organizers come talk to us. This month, we exhibited at "Minato Biodiversity Panel Exhibition" and participated in "Fish-1 Grand Prix." The panel exhibition introduces efforts of businesses and organizations operating in Minato Ward, Tokyo regarding biodiversity. “Fish-1 Grand Prix,” which is held grandly at Hibiya Park every year, has become "Fish-1 Grand Prix at Home ON LINE" this year. This is a long-term event from January 22nd to February 26th, so please take a look at the Fish-1 Grand Prix web site below:



Introduce MEL Activities at Biodiversity Exhibition

<https://pride-fish.jp/F1GP/2020/booth/mel/index.html> (all information is in Japanese)

3. Voice from Certified Entities

Due to heavy snowfall in northern Japan during the busy year-end and New Year holidays for businesses, we have decided to postpone Voice from Certified Entities to next month.

4. Column

This month, we asked Mr. Hiroshi Terashima, the former vice chairman of the Japan Society for Ocean Policy, who has been leading Japan's ocean policy for many years. Mr. Terashima is instructing us on how to enhance Japan's presence in the world regarding oceans and fisheries.

“Expectation for MEL Japan”

In the latter half of the 20th century, with the spread of fish food and global development of fishery, marine resources that support our diet became in danger due to overcaught. Since then, in order to solve this issues, sustainable fishery efforts have been undertaken worldwide to protect marine resources.

In "Goal 14: Life Below Water" of SDGs, the targets are listed: sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics and so on. It goes without saying that efforts to achieve these goals require those who directly involved in the fishery, distribution and processing. Yet, not only that, but the way for participation in their initiative is open for the general public who consume a wide range of fish. However, it does not seem to be fully pervasive among them yet, so I would like to discuss it here.



Mr. Hiroshi Terashima

In retrospect, people say that in order to conserve marine resources and maintain sustainable fisheries, there is a way not only to manage the fishery directly, but also to approach from the market or consumer side. Was it not until the 1990s that it came to be recognized by the public? In 1997, MSC (Marine Stewardship Council) started certification activities for marine eco-label with the aim of sustainable use of marine products. A marine eco-label supports establishment of traceable supply chain in which consumers can select marine products originated from sustainable fisheries not from IUU fisheries. This idea was born from the initiative of non-profit private organization. The marine eco-label has spread widely around the world since the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) adopted "Guidelines for the Ecolabeling of Fish and Fisheries Products from Marine Capture Fisheries" in 2005. I remember hearing about MSC's marine eco-label at that time, and thinking that it would be great for the general public to participate in and contribute to promotion of sustainable fisheries as a consumer of marine products.

In Japan as well, Marine Eco-label Japan was established within Japan Fisheries Association in 2007, and activities of marine eco-label begun. Their activity had not reached sufficient public

recognition; however, the situation began to move significantly when Marine Eco-label Japan Council (MEL Council) was incorporated in 2016. It started with the aim of creating a "world-recognized marine eco-label originating in Japan." Through internationalization of the scheme and raising awareness at home and abroad, it is expected to become the food procurement standard for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games, and contribute to promotion of exports of Japanese marine products, new development of Japan's fisheries industry and SDGs realization. Finally, in December 2019, MEL gained recognition from GSSI (Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative), an international platform for marine eco-label scheme, as the ninth scheme in the world and the first in Asia. I would like to pay tribute to the efforts of the MEL Japan Council members who had cleared GSSI's strict assessment and achieved this. It is very significant that MEL Japan, originated in Japan, was approved in international standard.

It is expected to directly inform the inside and outside of Japan that Japan is engaged in sustainable fisheries, increase credibility of Japan's fisheries, promote expansion of consumption of marine products, and contribute to promotion of exports of marine products. Finally, returning to the question raised at the beginning, the marine ecolabel becomes effective when citizens who consume marine products select and purchase "eco-labeled" marine products.

I would like to ask you again. Please recognize the importance of marine and marine resources and take initiative in selecting "eco-labeled" marine products with a positive feeling that you will actively participate in the formation of sustainable fisheries. Regarding this, I would like to commend MEL Japan Council for its immediate task of increasing the number of certification and target fish species, as well as raising awareness among retail operators and general consumers.

Written by Mr. Hiroshi Terashima

POSTSCRIPT

Biden administration has started under the banner of "rebuild democracy." For the United States, which has to prioritize the covid-19, the future of the challenges looks unknown, but it seems that a tough challenge is waiting. Amid of covid-19 spreading, Japan has been hit by a big freeze since the end of last year. We are worried that there is heavy snowfall in Kyushu as well as in snowy regions in northern Japan, which will hinder business activities.

MEL secretariat is also increasing telework in line with a request from the government to refrain from going out unnecessarily, but since we are working in shifts, there is no problem with the necessary contact. If you have any comments or suggestions, feel free to let us know!

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