

March 31st, 2021

Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

## **MEL NEWS VOL. 36 (ENGLISH EDITION)**

Dear Our Partners:

This month, ten years after the Great East Japan Earthquake, according to a survey, more than 80% of people feel that the memory of unprecedented disaster has faded... We would like to extend my deepest sympathies to all those affected by the disaster and send a yell to those who are moving forward without breaking the challenges.

At the annual meeting of the NPFC (North Pacific Fishery Management Council), 40% reduction of Pacific Saury TAC was finally agreed upon with various problems. On the other hand, IUU related to the government by a certain country was pointed out in an international forum. While the idea of sustainable use of marine resources is gaining a foothold in the world, resource conservation is still in the process of "long journey." We take it seriously as a person being involved with marine eco-label activities.

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

### **1. Status of MEL Certification**

This month's new certifications were 2 for aquaculture, and 12 for CoC - 14 cases for the total. As a result, the accumulated number of certifications is 104 by the end of March 2021. It has been two years and one month since the first seven cases came into effect on February 28, 2019. We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the certified entities, accreditation body, certification body, and other related parties for their efforts, and the government that has been promoting the certification system as a policy as well.



Seven Representative of Awarded Certified Entities

Due to the covid-19, we were having a hard time for holding a certificate award ceremony, but we took an opportunity of Seafood Show Osaka 2021 on March 17. We had sent an invitation mainly to those who had not yet attended the ceremony in the west of Kansai, but many people were worried about the pandemic, seven companies and organizations attended.

The representatives of each certified entities expressed their strong determination to promote the sustainable use of marine products. After the ceremony, we held a forum to exchange opinions, the low awareness of MEL was the main issue that everyone pointed out. But the wind is clearly changing. We were glad to hear that an participant said, "we will use the certification to support our business because we made effort to obtain it."

## 2. Event Participation

This month, we exhibited at FOOD EX JAPAN 2021 in Maruhari Messe, Chiba, from March 9 to 12 and Seafood Show Osaka 2021 in Osaka ATC Hall from March 17 to 18. It was a little lonely for both exhibitors and visitors because of restrictions on the covid-19 infection control.

At FOOD EX, MEL Japan Council set up a MEL-certified product booth along with educational activities of marine eco-label, and appealed to visitors. Around the MEL booth, Miyazaki Prefectural Fisheries Federation, Okamura Food, Yonkyu, and other companies, who are conscious of export promotion, participated in. We got an impression that not only a certification but collaboration with products brings about a positive synergistic effect of connection between SDGs and marine eco-label certification.



Mr. Yamaguchi, Director General of Fisheries Agency, stops by booth

Same as did at FOOD EX JAPAN, we conducted educational promotion and exhibited certified products in Osaka. Since there were a lot of space, we could communicate well with visitors and business partners. We felt that visitor's interest for marine eco-label is clearly increasing. We also displayed MEL-certified products provided by 15 certified entities, which were well received, as well. At the seminar of SDGs program called "ATC Marine Week" held as a side event of Seafood Show, Mr. Kakizoe, president of MEL Japan Council, made a presentation under the theme of "Usefulness of Marine Ecolabel to achieve SDGs."

In terms of fisheries in Osaka Bay, Shirasu Anchovy of Osaka Prefectural Resource Management Boat Seine Fisheries Committee and that of Kii Channel Boat Seine Fisheries Cooperative

obtained the certification. Now Settsu Boat Seine Fisheries Association (Shirasu Anchovy), Osaka Prefectural Sardine Purse Seine Fisheries Cooperative (Sardine, Jack Mackerel, etc.) and Kata Fisheries Cooperative (Red Sea Breams) are in the process of certification assessment. We are glad that there are three booths to present marine resource and fisheries in Osaka Bay that everyone is working on with high awareness of sustainable fisheries.

### 3. Voice from Certified Entities

This month, Mr. Takeshi Nakasako, president of Hyoshoku Co., Ltd., who is practicing "delicious fish production" through nature-friendly aquaculture, shares his thought with us.

*"We Want People all over World to Eat Safe, Delicious and High-Quality Japanese Fish"*

*We cultivate mainly Yellowtail (*Seriola quinqueradiata*) and Bluefin Tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) off the coast of Oita, Miyazaki, Nagasaki, and Kochi prefectures. We have been doing under the creed of "creating and raising delicious fish." It is grown in "Hirobiro Ikesu (wider cage)," which is about 48 times the size of normal cage, and I think that this aquaculture method would lead to the sustainable aquaculture, the basis of MEL, so we obtained MEL certification in July 2019.*



Hyoshoku's large scaled cages in Tsumi Bay and its Office & Process Center

*For me, even when new employees who joined the company this year reach at their retirement age, marine environment where the fishing ground can be used forever and business can be continued should be well sustained so that consumers gave us a voice of delight, "fish is fresh and delicious, and safe and secure" which is MEL's concept, I believe.*

*Last year, since the beginning of the year, there had been a large amount of Yellowtail and other fish remained in the cages, and we expected it to be a fierce year due to the drop in the market price. It is still difficult to forecast the post-covid-19 at this point, but I think the industry will gradually recover.*

*A few days ago, I talked to a customer of London. He said this year's EU summer-autumn vacation reservations are two to three times as many as before the covid-19 outbreak. Spread of vaccine and movement of people would become extremely large because of reaction of restricted life and feeling. I look forward to revival of eating out on a global scale. Let's take this opportunity to export safe and secure, delicious and high-quality fish from Japan. For that reason, we would like to ask Marine Eco-Label Japan for their support.*

*Written by Takeshi Nakasako*

#### **4. Column**

This month, we asked Mr. Eiji Tanaka, professor of Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology, who is engaged in development of MEL Japan Fishery Standard Management. Prof. Tanaka helps a lot for us in terms of structuring scientific evidence, auditor training program, etc.

##### *"Transformation of MEL Japan"*

*I have been involved with MEL Japan since its launch in 2007. Since that time, the assessment criteria and methods were deliberated with the aim of reducing an assessment fee so that Japanese small-scale fisheries could obtain the certification. I also participated in the several conferences or workshops only with transportation expenses. If I think about it now, I think that the standard criteria for the old MEL was developed driven by the passion of members at that time.*

*There were the points we kept in mind that in order to make it cheaper, we should mainly examine documents as much as possible, and good practices known in Japan for Japanese fishermen. So to speak, it was done within the group, but I think that the Japanese-style resource management certified by the old MEL is still excellent.*



Professor Eiji Tanaka

*MEL has changed significantly along with the recognition of GSSI global standard. The biggest change is the introduction of Western value*

*and culture. In Western societies, the status of scientists is high and scientific criteria for judgment are regarded as important. It was also important to deal with environmental issues that are of great interest to people, and to ensure fairness and transparency that everyone can understand.*

*For this reason, the new MEL focuses on scientific and objective standards based on biological resource assessment and management standard, and its transparency is also a screening standard. The assessment of interspecific relation and ecosystem impacts of fisheries became one of the major pillars. It is also required to create a report that could be understood by the general public to some extent. Although the old MEL standard in which a simple audit report was sufficient, came to an end two month ago, the new MEL has become an internationally accepted certification standard.*

*Written by Mr. Eiji Tanaka*

#### **POSTSCRIPT**

It has passed three years since the first MEL NEWS was released that we are always thinking about how to contribute to our partners. If the news-letter is too long, it may not be easy to read, but if it is too short, it may not be delivered our messages to you - three year is a kind of trial and error. We would like to express our gratitude and appreciation for that the accumulated number of certifications has reached over 100 cases, and that the Council is asked to attend in several events.

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

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