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Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

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Dear Our Partners:

Recently, Japanese government has decided to release the treated water from the Fukushima nuclear power plant into the sea, which is said to begin two years later though. It is a little bit painful that the announcement of the release of treated water coincides with the time when fishery related people in Fukushima are strengthening the campaign called "Joban Fish is back!" after the test operation is over. ("Joban" is the old region name of Fukushima and Ibaragi Prefecture combined)

We should keep an eye on climate change, another emergency facing humankind today. Not only political and administrative issues, but also how to prepare for the medium- to long-term, as a matter of course, is required for each person.

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

1. Status of MEL Certification

The new certification added on this month was two for fishery, one for aquaculture, and three for CoC - the total of 6 cases. The Tomakomai Fisheries Cooperative's Surf Clam certification, which was transferred from the former MEL Fishery certification, has come into effect. We would like to pay tribute to the efforts of everyone involved. This is the second certification for shellfish, following the Jusan Fisheries Cooperative's Yamato Shijim Fresh Water Cram, which came into effect in December last year. In addition, we are pleased to see that the Shirasu (Anchovy) Ship Seine Net Fishery operated by Aichi Prefecture Shirasu and Ikanago Ship Seine Net Fishery Association has been certified. The base of certification is expanding.

In last month's issue reported that the cumulative number of certifications exceeded 100, we would like to take this opportunity to summarize our steps since the inauguration of MEL Japan Council. In line with the strict rules of international standards, the sincere efforts that MEL Secretariat and people related have accumulated together. We believe that valuing culture of

following the rules will undoubtedly increase the value of products with the logo and evaluation of the certification that the applicants have obtained.

2. Voice from Certified Entities

Landing of Coho Salmon reaches its peak this month. Mr. Akira Takeshita, president of Yumigahama Suisan, Co. Ltd., shares his views and efforts toward sustainability operation. The company sells "Sakaiminato Salmon," one of the well-known farmed salmon brand in Japan.

"Finally, we can sell with the MEL logo. "

Our company, headquartered in Sakaiminato City, Tottori Prefecture, runs aqua-farm business of Coho Salmon and Cherry Salmon in Tottori and Niigata prefectures. We obtained MEL certification in 2019, but, unfortunately, sales with the MEL logo has not been realized. The MEL certification logo cannot be attached with the product if only a producer obtains the certification. All parties involved in every stage of supply chain need to get for sure. We are finally ready and pleased to enable to sell the product of Coho Salmon with the MEL logo.

The reason we decided to obtain MEL certification is not to sell our products at a high price. We thought about what sustainable aquaculture is for the future, verified that our work is right, and believed it is a good criterion for business improvement. The SDGs is attracting attention in the world, but on-site workers do not have an image of what to do specifically. The MEL aquaculture standard is globally recognized, which clearly describes the content required for aquaculture operation being suitable for Japan's aquaculture situation. We would like to study this standard, understand what the world demands, and increase the level of our work.

A person who worked for many years at the Tottori Prefectural Fisheries Experimental Station joined our company. Currently, as a center contact with MEL Council, he is in charge of preparing procedure manuals and records, as well as training employees related to the certification. At the MEL certification award ceremony, I got an impressive word, "Acquisition of MEL certification is just a start, not a goal." We also want to look back on our work and improve it through in-house study sessions and surveillance assessments by MEL auditors.

I heard that the total number of MEL certifications would reach 100 cases, which is good news. We hope that MEL auditors will continue to train us through rigorous annual assessment. And we expect that MEL will be the eco-label scheme which works together through continuously upgrading standard and assessment in order to help Japan's fishing industry develop more sustainably.

Written by Akira Takeshita



With Co-Workers (Takeshita-san is the one on the far right in the front)

3. Column

This month, Mr. Yoshihito Yamaguchi, General Manager, Foodstuff & Marine Products Department at Sojitz Corporation talks about marine eco-label from a standpoint of general trading company (Sogo Shosha) which business is very active in the world.

"Thoughts on MEL's Activities"

As the trend of the global sustainable development goals "SDGs" spreads and how Japan should work is being asked, I think it is one of Japan's missions to work on conserving the abundance of sea. Although the fishing industry has been the main industry of Japan for years, it has many problems such as decrease in fishery production, aging fisherman, shortage of successors, etc. We believe that, in order to solve such problems, by showing the attitude toward Japan's food safety and security, the effort of Marine Eco-Label Japan is very important for young people who will be responsible for the future of fishing industry playing an active role in the world.

● *Sojitz's Practice*

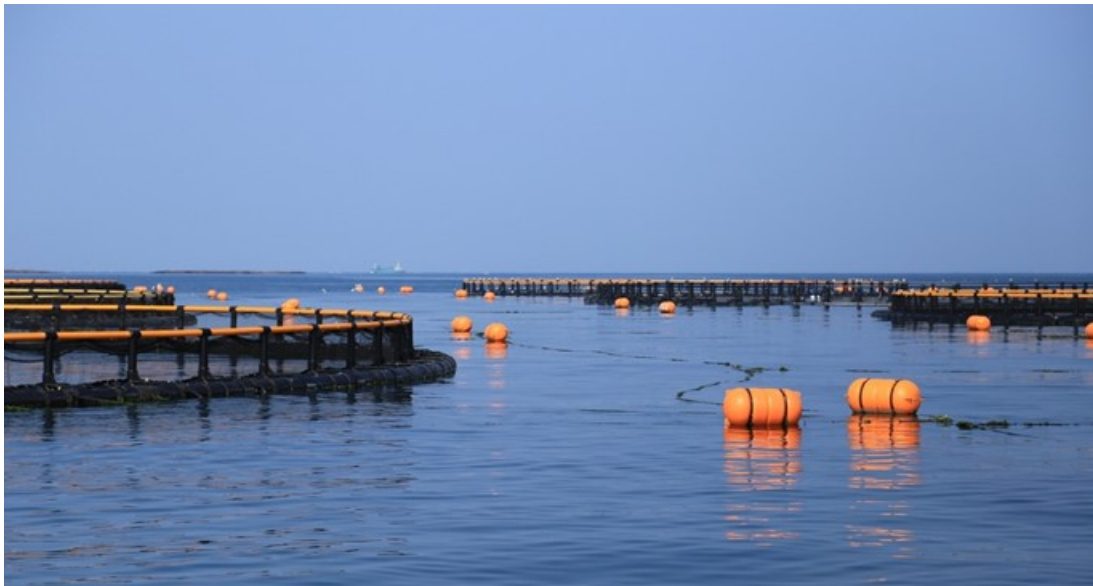
Based on the Sojitz Group Statement of "creates value and prosperity by connecting the world with a spirit of integrity," we are seeking to maximize the "two types of value" – "value for Sojitz" and "value for society." And as the environmental policy, the company sets our own policy; "as a global company, Sojitz Group considers environmental issues a crucial topic to be addressed in management. Striving for a sustainable society, we will work to preserve the environment and prevent pollution in our business activities, while creating businesses that are both highly competitive and environmentally friendly."

Although it is not necessary to reiterate, the importance of conserving global environment and natural environment is being reassessed worldwide for future generations. The materially affluent life of the present generation should not threaten future generations. In corporate activities as well, in order to realize a prosperous society, it is necessary to promote businesses that will sustainably enrich future generations, and in the corporate environmental policy, we should pursue development, supply and utilization of sustainable resources, and promote the initiatives for resource saving, suitable energy mix and stable supply of resources.

Regarding food resources, we are working on production and supply of resources that may be tight in the future. Our affiliated company runs frozen tuna processing and trading obtained MSC-CoC certification, and we sell the tuna products to Japan and other countries in the world. Recently, Tesco, the UK's largest supermarket, has committed to have all tuna products certified by 2025, and we plan to support this movement from the supply side together with our partners.

*In addition, we are being engaged in Bluefin Tuna farm operation in Nagasaki Prefecture, obtained *SCSA certification, and conducting sales activities not only in Japan but also overseas, and working toward the realization of a sustainable society.*

**SCSA is the seed certification standard (Seedings Council for Sustainable Aquaculture)*



Bluefin Tuna Farm in Takashima, Nagasaki Pref. operated by Sojitz Group

● *Through MEL activities*

MEL is originated from Japan, and Asia's first globally recognized marine eco-label scheme. However, the recognition of marine eco-label in Japan remains at an extremely low level, and consumers' awareness of sustainability of fishery resources is not comparable to that in Europe and the United States. I feel that it is difficult to enjoy a benefit of acquiring it.

In response to growing awareness of social issues, we can realize that the number of Japanese consumers seeking environmentally friendly products is steadily increasing, which it is still a small chunk though. We expect the awareness of dissemination of MEL will be promoted through the activities of Marine Eco-Label Japan. At the same time, as a general trading company, we will contribute to solving the problems facing Japan and sustainable development of the world's fisheries industry by actively promoting sustainable seafood product transaction.

Written by Mr. Yoshihito Yamaguchi

4. Practice of Certified Product and Promotion

This time, Mr. Kazutaka Okuda of Mie Prefectural Fisheries Cooperative Association gives us a report of practice of "Toshijima Wakame Seaweed with MEL logo.

"Wakame Seaweed from Waguura with Torch Relay for Tokyo Olympic 2021"

The Mie Prefectural Fisheries Cooperative Association, Tsu-City, Mie Prefecture, is working on expanding sales channel of "Toba boiled salted Wakame Seaweed" obtained MEL certification as the first case of seaweed in the world. The product is supposed to launch at Tokai Coop Association in May 2021.

Collaborating with Toba Isobe Fishery Cooperative and its Waguura Branch Operating Committee, we worked on applying for the certification and obtained MEL CoC Certification Ver.2.0. By distributing "Wakame" produced with consideration for sustainability attached with the logo, we ensure traceability from a production site to dining table, support consumers to select and buy the marine products produced in a responsible way, and aim at balancing the conservation of natural environment with livelihoods of local society.



Wakane Product with MEL Logo

Written by Kazutaka Okuda

As mentioned by Okuda-san, the torch relay of Tokyo Olympic 2021 was passing in front of the office of Waguura Branch of Toshijima Fishery Cooperative. Mr. Rikio Sato took a wonderful shot showing the board of MEL logo on the wall of office and torch relay, and share it with us. Thank you, Sato-san!



Beautifully condensed Shot with the torch relay and Mel-certified Wakame

POSTSCRIPT

We would like to inform you that Kasumi Suto has left MEL Japan Council at the end of this month. Kasumi joined the team in 2017 and has been working as a manager of general affairs being in charge of MEL CoC standard. She contributed a lot to getting a recognition from GSSI, in particular. We wish her the best of luck for all her future endeavors.

Chisako Endo has just joined MEL Japan Council on April 13th. She will work as an assistant for administrative work, auditor training program and consumer communication. Please come to meet Chisako and welcome her to the team!

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

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