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Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

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Dear MEL Partners:

Although it is reported the spread of pandemic is settling down in some countries with high vaccination rate, there are people in Japan who get infected or even die – we are a little bit behind the United States and Western Europe. A survey shows more than 80% still feel anxious; dissatisfaction has accumulated and a limit of our patience is continuing. Hope that you should pay close attention to yourself again and prepare for the new normal.

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 four for CoC only. Currently, according to the website of JFRCA, MEL's CAB, three retailers' applications of assessment have been approved: York Foods, York Benimaru and Miyagi COOP, and several others are preparing. Once a retailer obtains CoC certification, their vendors and manufacturers will follow. "Certification Chain" from a producer to a table helps establish the traceability system which guarantees full transparency and sustainable fishery.

2. Voice from Certified Entities

Continued from the last month, we would like to introduce a topic of farmed Coho Salmon. Mr. Tomiyoshi Togawa of Nichimo Marine Culture Co., Ltd., one of the leading Coho Salmon producers in Japan, share his team's experience, practices and thoughts for MEL.

"I Would Like to Tell Consumers More about Efforts for MEL"

Nichimo Marine Culture (NMC) is a wholly owned subsidiary of Nichimo Co., Ltd. NMC is headquartered in Fukuoka Prefecture being engaged with total business support of aquaculture for warm water area mainly in Kyushu and Shikoku and for cold water areas mainly in Tohoku and Hokkaido. We obtained MEL Aquaculture Certification under a group of seven producers who

belong to Miyagi Nichimo in 2020 that Nichimo Group handles integrated operation from processing to sales and marketing. Miyagi Nichimo Coho Salmon Group is the group established about 20 years ago, and has held a meeting once every two months since then to exchange information so as to produce better farmed salmon.

When the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred and caused group's cages and ships to be swept away, one month after, they gathered on a fully rubble-covered beach and discussed whether to deal with the Coho Salmon operation. Finally, we decided to revive unanimously and swore that we should produce the salmon product which gains the most praise from consumers, and started taking steps to resume the farming. Since then, we have received a great deal of cooperation from various people up until now.

To my great delight, ten years after the earthquake, the generations within the group are gradually changing; the number of younger generations is increasing. Young people understood MEL certification standards and prepared for its application keeping the group together. "Through acquiring the certification, we can tell consumers that we are seriously working to create a sustainable aquaculture business;" youngers talked to fathers in various situations.

Nichimo, the parent company handling processing and sales, obtained MEL CoC certification in May 2021. As a result, we are delighted to be able to convey our commitment and activities for MEL fairly and closely to the consumers. We believe that MEL will develop up to where it gets recognized not only in Japan, but from overseas, and we will continue to work with a sense of mission, so we would ask MEL Japan Council for its continued guidance and encouragement.

Written by Tomiyoshi Togawa



Partners of Miyagi Nichimo Farmed Coho Salmon Group

3. Column

This month, we asked Chikako Makino, Deputy General Manager of Strategic Planning Division of Japan Accreditation Board (JAB), MEL's accreditation body. JAB plays a central role in ensuring the reliability of certification system. Makino-san talks about the cutting-edge movement of certification in the world.

"Impact on UN SDGs and Product Certification System - Value of Green Finance and Sustainable Finance"

● Summary

Among the conformity assessment systems, the product certification system was influenced early by the spread of UN SDGs. Environmental and social aspects are also important factors of sustainable finance. It is useful to disclose the information that a company obtains an accredited product certification.

● Main Story

Along with the prevention against covid-19 and revision of system rules related to GFSI and GSSI, product certification system rules such as forest certification are also being revised. First of all, there is an increasing demand for human rights, certification processes, and opportunities for women being utilized in certification audits. Among the conformity assessment systems, it was the product certification system that required measures for human rights and gender equality in conjunction with the spread of UN SDGs.

Currently, as an international standard for climate change, calculation of GHG emissions (ISO14064-1), management of GHG reduction and absorption projects (ISO14064-2), validation and verification (ISO14064-3), and its certification standards (ISO14065) have all been revised in accordance with the Paris Agreement. It is time to change significantly mitigation activities for environment and climate using the newly revised standards.



Ms. Chikako Makino

What kind of actions related to GHG reduction and absorption contribute to Climate Finance, and what kind of climate actions including certification activities contribute to Green Finance; such discussion of international standardization has also progressed (ISO14030). We suggested effectiveness of MEL system as an example of EU taxonomy (ISO 14030-3) based on the discussion

that what kind of product certification system (ISO14065) contributes to Green Investment, and finally the proposal of MEL system was accepted. There is a movement, even in this new trend of Green Investment, the usefulness of product certification system is being understood and then adopted.

Furthermore, whether certification activities contribute to Sustainable Finance is about to be standardized internationally. The important factors are climate change (GHG reduction and adaptation measures), water management, waste treatment, human rights and gender equality, all of which are necessary to be adapted. And it has become newly important to create the environment where investors can be informed that investees obtain certification on such topics. It would lead to the story that, by disclosing the information that the product certification is obtained through the assessment conducted by an accredited certification body, the value of product certification will be enhanced, and the corporate valuation from investors standpoint will be improved as well.

Why don't you take this opportunity to review the published certification information?

Written by Mr. Chikako Makino

4. Practice of Certified Product and Promotion

Ito-Yokado acquired MEL CoC certification and launched MEL-certified four species in April 2021, just one year ago. We are delighted that while the number of certified seafood products has increased, MEL's logo and its recognition at Ito-Yokado's store have become popular. This time, Mr. Kazuki Yuyama, Senior Merchandiser of Seafood at Marche Department, gives us encouraging comments regard certified product development.

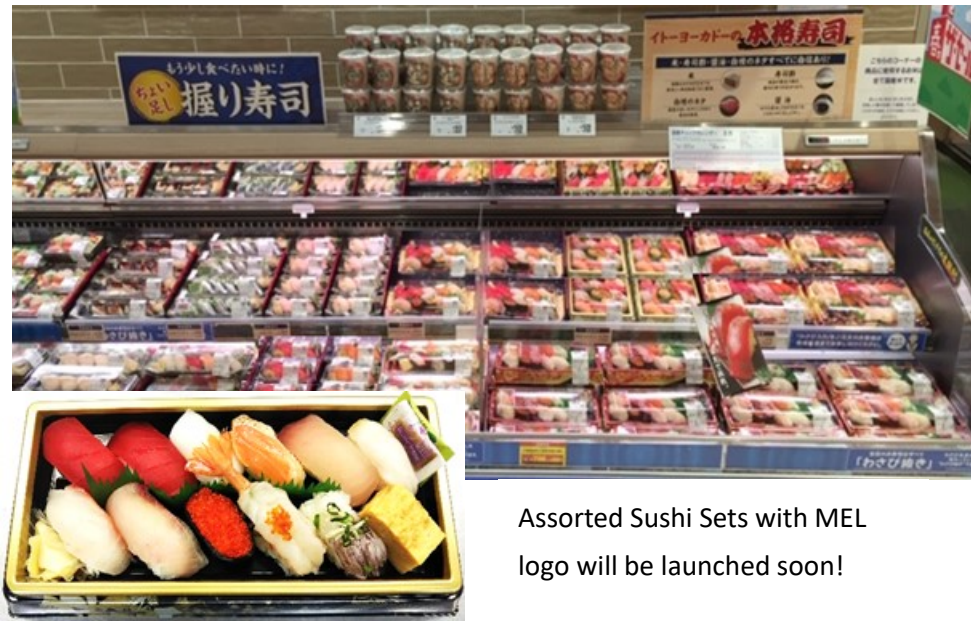
"New Challenges of Marine Ecolabel"

Since April of last year, we have been selling seafood products with MEL logo. We participated in MEL's efforts to promote the use of sustainable seafood together with producers and distributors incorporating combined with our store brand "Fresh Seafood with Traceability (Kao ga mieru osakana)". We are now taking on further challenges as the second year of this program. Each store can process raw material (fillet or loin) into a fillet cut or sashimi slice, put in a pack and sell it by ourselves. But, we are proceeding with commercializing it in a form much easier for customers to use.

Case 1: Red Sea Bream and Amberjack used in Seafood Bowl (Kaisen Don) or Sushi Set

We are promoting the new collaboration program with Deli Dept. that raw material can be shared and used in different forms at a same store under the co-brand of "Fresh Seafood

with Traceability" and "MEL" aiming at the weekend big sales for home meal mainly. In the near future, we plan to use this idea as the main axis for assorted sushi pack at Deli counter shown below photos.



Assorted Sushi Sets with MEL logo will be launched soon!

Case 2: Mazaki Wakame Seaweed Salted

We have launched individually packaged Wakame Seaweed product with MEL logo. This is a new version of MEL certification program that our supplier, Taro-cho Fisheries Cooperative in Iwate Prefecture which acquired MEL Aquaculture Certification for Wakame Seaweed, produces the product (shown in the right) at their CoC-certified co-packer's plant, and supplies it to Ito-Yokado stores. This product has been very popular for many years since it was launched, and is one of the indispensable items for our stores. We will continuously develop and sell such packaged products using MEL-certified seafood.



New Package of Wakame

Besides at a fresh seafood counter, we will commonly use raw material with Deli Dept. and co-packers, and expand the lineup of certified product much more, which is our mission as an influential major retailer in Japan. We will focus on this kind of cross-merchandising and product development continuously.

Written by Kazuki Yuyama

POSTSCRIPT

We are really touched by the story from Togawa-san that the farming facilities of Shizukawa Branch of Miyagi Fishery Cooperative were fully devastated by the earthquake and the people was struggling to get through together. Makino-san helps us have a wide view not shutting ourselves in the fishing world. Yuyama-san's report gives us an insight that as a point of contact with consumers, the activities of retail and foodservice sectors are imperative in order to have a marine ecolabel expand into the society as a reliable bridge between production and consumption.

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

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