



June 30th 2021

Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

## MEL NEWS VOL. 39 (ENGLISH EDITION)

Dear MEL Partners:

Although the rainy season has not ended, the summer solstice of 24 divisions of solar year has arrived. This month, we will continue to have Zassetsu (standard days signifying the changing of the seasons) related to fish such as Nyubai (beginning of rainy season) and Hangesho (11th day after the summer solstice). In addition to Nyubai Iwashi (sardines caught beginning of rainy seasons) and Tsuyu Isaki (pigfish in rainy season), both of which are typical fish in the rainy season, we hear that the fishing of Skipjack Tuna is doing well, its prime season was delay this year though. It always makes me feel good to see that seasonably fresh fish are placed at the fishmonger's counter.

The author has just finished the second shot of vaccination. Even if you wear a mask, you would be infected with the new coronavirus variant. We will not be able to see the day when we feel safe, but we should be very careful and overcome this difficult time.

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

### 1. Status of MEL Certification

This month, one fishery, three aquaculture, and seven CoC were certified. A special note is that 22 vessels belonging to the Japan Tuna Fisheries Cooperative Association collectively obtained the certification for skip jack tuna, pole-and-line fishery. Processors had already obtained CoC certification and had been waiting for fishing boat's, so this certification has finally connected the fishing grounds to the dining table with MEL certification. As a result, we will be able to see the processed the consumer-packaged skip jack Tataki or Sashimi in stores all over Japan.

York Co., Ltd. was certified as the second company in the retail industry. York is the local supermarket chain operating 100 branches in the Tokyo metropolitan area. This is the second case of the Seven & i Group. Another supermarket chain of Seven & i Group, York Benimaru in Tohoku regions is currently in the process of certification assessment.

## **2. Member Meeting and Board Meeting**

The sixth General Meeting was held on June 22. As measures against the covid-19, we ensured the environment in the conference room keeping social distancing. The directors, members of MEL, advisory board members as well as the representatives of Fisheries Agency attended the General Meeting. On the agenda, we received approval for the fiscal 2020 business report and financial results, as well as the election of one director. Mr. Kenji Kagawa, president of the Japan Tuna Fisheries Cooperative Association, was appointed as a new director.

The 24th Board Meeting was held following in the General Meeting. We received an approval for the amendment of complaint handling rules and admission of new member. The approved complaint handling rules are listed on MEL Japan's website. The Japan Aqua-cultured Fish Feed Association (JAFA) was newly approved to become the member of MEL. JAFA is the industrial group of compound feed manufacturers that Japan's major feed companies belong to.

## **3. Voice from Certified Entities**

This month, we asked Mr. Mitsugu Minakura, the head of the Kagoshima Kanoya Fisheries Cooperative Association, which obtained MEL Aquaculture certification for Amberjack, Yellowtail and Hiramasa Kingfish. We can feel the earnest efforts of everyone, including Minakura-san from his essay.

*"About Effort for MEL Certification"*

*The Kanoya City Fisheries Cooperative Association is located in the eastern part of Kagoshima Bay (Kinko Bay). With a warm climate and average water temperature of more than 15 °C, we operate a small bottom trawl and pole-and-line fishing fishery being centered on aquaculture. Nine aqua operators are farming Yellowtail and Hiramasa (Kingfish), mainly Amberjack, with an annual production of about 3,800 tons for three species combined.*

*In February 2020, we obtained MEL Aquaculture certification for Amberjack, Yellowtail, and Hiramasa, and CoC certification for processing facilities as well. As for the efforts of Kanoya Fisheries Cooperative concerned, firstly, it makes the best use of characteristics of aqua-farming environment: good seawater flows with depth of 40 to 90 meter and suppressive fishing ground against red tide and fish diseases. Secondly, using the rose which is the city flower of Kanoya, the ingredient of rose is contained in feed for the fish to pursue the deliciousness. Thirdly, we acquired ISO-22000 certification at our own processing facilities and established a system of selling products for processing such as fillets and loin. But, we are not satisfied with our efforts to date, and we will continue to try and device on aquaculture.*

*Therefore, we decided to take advantage of our past efforts to obtain MEL certification and*

*further upgrading. By doing so, first, we will publicize the safety and security and deliciousness of our Amberjack, Yellowtail, and Hiramasa, which will lead to increase added value and sales promotion. Second, because the certification makes it possible to appeal to overseas markets, so we will focus on export of mainly Amberjack. Last, in order to respond to consumer needs and growing demand for processed products, we would like to adjust processing for that. And in order to continue sustainable aquaculture, we have renewed our recognition that it is necessary to conduct aquaculture that takes the environment into consideration, as is the case with MEL.*

*At present, we are working to publicize the fact that it is a certified fishery product by using package materials with the MEL logo on Amberjack fillets, etc., and we would like to further strengthen our efforts in the future.*

*Written by Mitsugu Minakura*



Left: Farming Cages, Center: MEL Logo on Package, Right: Kanoya's Kampachi

#### **4. Column**

This month, Professor Mitsutaku Makino of the University of Tokyo, Center for International Collaboration Atmosphere and Ocean Research Institute talked about his expectations for MEL from an academic standpoint. Makino-san is active internationally in the fields of marine and fisheries and also a member of the MEL Japan advisory board.

*"MEL as Fisheries Certification of Asia"*

*It has been four and a half years since the MEL Council was established in December 2016. During this period, Japan has been strengthening its fishery resources management, including major revisions to the Act of Fisheries, the Act on the Regulation of Appropriate Fishery Distribution, the Fourth Basic Plan for Fisheries, and the Third Basic Plan for Ocean Policy. Internationally, SDGs 14 and other international collaborations to ensure ocean sustainability are in full swing, including the announcement of the Osaka Blue Ocean Vision, the High-Level Panel toward Formulation of Sustainable Ocean Economic by the leaders of major countries, and the United Nations Conference on Ocean Science in 10 (UNDOS).*

*As a long-time fish-eating country and a member of Asia, which is the center of the world's fisheries industry, there is a big expectation that Japan's fisheries certification plays a role internationally. In the management of fishery resources in Asia, where there are diverse of target fish species, the number of fishermen, fishing vessels and type of fishing gears, and there are many small-scale fisheries, it is important to take a "Co-management" approach that combines public management by the government and voluntary management by on-site fishermen or resource users. Japan should become the first country in the world to accumulate knowledge and experience, and develop a model for fishery certification.*



Prof. Mitsutaku Makino

*There are many detailed resource management measures that can be implemented effectively and efficiently only through voluntary management. I would like to see that MEL strengthens the areas that cannot be covered by government management alone.*

*On the other hand, the significance of fishery certification lies in its scientific, objective and international aspects. Therefore, we must respond scientifically, objectively and internationally to the general perception that self-management is unscientific. Furthermore, scientific knowledge is not the only useful one for resource management. Traditional and regional knowledge accumulated in the region have values that the scientific cannot cover. Isn't it necessary to take an attitude of realizing sustainable fisheries by mobilizing all the knowledge that society has? In this sense, I would like MEL to grow into the fishery certification system that supports the wisdom, ingenuity and efforts of people living with the sea.*

*Written by Mr. Mitsutaku Makino*

## **5. Practice of Certified Product and Promotion**

Although sales have been stagnant due to the impact of covid-19 pandemic, a tie-up campaign between Ainan Fisheries Cooperative, a red sea bream aquaculture operator, and hamburger chain Mos Burger has launched "Red Sea Bream Cutlet Burger" for a limited period and in limited quantities. We received a report from Mr. Takahiro Okada of the Ainan Fisheries Cooperative, who promoted this project.

*"New Possibilities of Ainan Red Sea Bream – Red Sea Bream Cutlet Burger"*

*The Ainan Fisheries Cooperative Association based in Ainan-Cho, Ehime Prefecture is*

*engaged in aquaculture operation in one of the largest aquaculture production areas in Japan, and obtained MEL Aquaculture certification for red sea bream.*

*In April 2020, shipments of Red Sea Bream, which was supposed to reach one of the peaks of demand as a brand of "Sakura Dai (Cherry Blossom Red Sea Beam)," showed a slowdown due to the issuance of a state of emergency, especially for large sea breams (2kg up). We discussed with the producers wondering if we could make new value appeal and meal suggestion when people are being asked to do new daily lives due to the coronavirus, instead of throwing the fish into the market at a deep discount price. Then, we came up with an idea of "Red Sea Bream for Burger" and approached Nippon Suisan Kaisha (Nissui), one of our business partners and sounded this concept. In collaboration with Nissui team, we proceeded with our proposal to Mos Food Service eagerly having a hope of "We only have Mos Burger!"*



Mos Red Sea Bream Cutlet Burger  
Priced at JPY 530.00 and sold 1 million unit

*In addition to the support of Ainan Town and our commitment to food safety and security and quality, we believe that our efforts for sustainable aquaculture (= MEL certification) were also highly evaluated. We also believe that MEL certification was one of the factors that helped small organizations like us to gain trust from large companies like Nissui and Mos Food Service. This time, Mos Burger fully markets "Red Sea Bream in Ainan" that we are aiming to acquire a regional group trademark, as a result, it could be publicized nationwide.*

*I think it was an initiative of "Sanpo-yoshi" or "Three Ways Satisfaction" that means that the food service operator supports for production side, the producer can spread their brand nationwide and we provide consumers with delicious burgers made from reliable domestic ingredients. This "Red Sea Bream Cutlet Burger" was a big hit nationwide partly because of its support for the producers, but I feel that we could create new possibilities and values for the red sea bream. I believe that the foundation of its value lies in the contribution of MEL certification, and will continue to work hard to make efforts based on MEL certification.*

*Written by Takahiro Okada*

#### **Afterword**

Climate change is again in focus, but this year it is reported that catch of Mojako (yellowtail's juvenile fish) looks very poor. Since it is the main fish of MEL Aquaculture certification, it may be a headache for everyone. As a part of smartification of aquaculture industry, the evolution of

feed and seeds is expected. This month, the Japan Aqua-cultured Fish Feed Association, which is working to study the feed standard with MEL Japan, joined the member of MEL. We hope we can contribute to the growth of the aquaculture industry in Japan.

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

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