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Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

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Dear MEL Partners:

At the joint ITTAT and WCPFC-NC working group held on July 27 and 29, a tentative agreement was reached on 15% increase in the catch quota for large Pacific Bluefin Tuna in 2022, for which relevant countries have been focusing on resource recovery. There will be various discussions until the final decision is made, but I would like to express my respect for the efforts of those involved in the successful recovery of the Bluefin Tuna stocks by conducting the harvest control following that of the Atlantic Bluefin Tuna.

At the same time, Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) announced that it could suspend 22 certified tuna fisheries in the Western Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) in June 2023 if WCPFC fails to agree the management measures required by the MSC or conduct the harvest strategies and harvest control recommended in the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. In general, it is "difference between administrative policies and third-party certification," but considering the various effects, it is too tough for the business entities to handle this issue by just saying differences in their way of thinking. We will listen to your opinions and see if there is anything we could do.

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

1. Status of MEL Certification

There were two cases certified in total, one for aquaculture and one for CoC: Taichi's Stripe Jack Mackerel and Notsuke Fisheries Cooperative's Chum Salmon processing. The total number of certifications reached 139: 11 for fisheries, 49 for aquaculture, and 79 for CoC.

2. Voice from Certified Entities

This month, we asked Mr. Takeru Yoshida, president of Tsukiji Uoichiba Co., Ltd., to write a column on the theme of "Using Eco-Label for Marine Products" from wholesaler's viewpoint. Tsukiji Uoichiba, including its group companies, has obtained MSC and ASC certifications prior to MEL and has been engaged in advanced activities.

“MEL Certification for Marine Products Wholesalers”

First of all, let me introduce our company. Tsukiji Fish Market Co., Ltd. has handled a large number of marine products under the brand of "Touichi" for approximately 75 years since the days of Tokyo Uoichiba Co., Ltd. At present, since we moved a business base from Tsukiji to Toyosu, we have continued our efforts to ensure a stable supply of marine products and developed attractive products for consumers.

I would like to talk about the process of obtaining certification. Our company obtained MEL Chain of Custody (CoC) certification on September 4, 2020. At that time, the background or trigger were; 1) in preparation for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, there was a strong request from the restaurant sector for us to prepare for supplying foodstuffs, and 2) under the environment of SDGs movement, there has been a growing demand for safe and secure foodstuffs, particularly in the export business. Under these circumstances, we obtained the certification ahead of the industry.

I would like to introduce our company's current initiatives. Based on the corporate concept of "we aim to achieve sustainable growth by enhancing our platforms as a seafood wholesaler," our company is currently implementing its Mid-Term Business Plan for 2021 to 2023 and developed MEL-related programs in collaboration with customers and suppliers. The first example is to work with Fukushima Prefecture to prevent weathering the memory of tragedy, which marks the tenth year after the disaster. We developed MEL-certified Mackerel in Saikyo Sauce caught off the coast of Fukushima for promotion of "Tohoku in 2021." We handled selection and purchase of raw materials, product planning and design, delivery of raw materials and traceability inspection. With a tie-up with the Fukushima Prefectural Federation of Fisheries Associations, we achieved a good result of successful promotion. The second example is to work with important customers to strengthen MEL initiatives. Currently, focusing on MEL-certified farmed sea bream, we are developing strong cooperation with several leading retailers based on this. We are also currently focusing on fish menus to expand the number of MEL-certified fish.

As a future development, through expanding the range of fish species and increasing customers' recognition, we will continue to take on the challenge of environmentally conscious sustainable marine products. To conclude, despite the severe environment of the recent COVID-19, we would like to contribute to society toward greater business opportunities



Program with Fukushima Prefecture
MEL Certified Japanese Mackerel in Saikyo Sauce

while maintaining product quality by appealing to customers of MEL-certified fish species and cooperating with certification chains.

Written by Takeshi Yoshida

3. Column

As the aquaculture continues to be innovated around the world, I asked Mr. Takamasa Kashiwagi, Division COO, Produce and Marine Product Div., of Mitsubishi Corporation, to share his opinions about Japan's challenges in making the aquaculture a growing industry to compete with the rest of the world.

"Possibility of Sustainable Growth of Domestic Aquaculture in Partnership with MEL"

Since the acquisition of a salmon farming company in Norway, we have increased exchanges with various people in the overseas fishery and aquaculture industries. Before the pandemic outbreak, when I took a Chinese seafood buyer to a place on the hill where we can see yellowtail farms, he exclaimed, "I want Chinese consumers to eat the fish reared here." It meant the respect for Japan's rich ocean and trust for the Japanese farmers who nurture fish in that environment with carefulness. It was the moment when I realized once again the strength of the Japanese brand.

At the same time, the Japanese seafood brand demonstrates 100% effect on overseas markets. Accordingly, the business model that incorporates overseas market development as a pillar of our business strategy will be the one that makes the most of the brand power of "Japanese marine products." The development of overseas markets for farmed scallop and yellowtail has already progressed, and I believe that developing them into the model that can respond to ESG, an irreversible trend in the world, while ensuring economic rational, is the powerful option for the Japan's aquaculture industry to achieve further sustainable growth.

Specifically, we are combining the reduction of aquaculture costs and that of environmental load through smartification of aquaculture business utilizing digital technology. For instance, in the salmon farming operation, demonstration experiment is underway to use IOT and AI to systematize the skills of artisans to feed



Smart Aquaculture: Cermaq's Individual Identification Device

fish optimally based on the condition of the sea and reared fish. This approach helps reduce not only the costs by improving feeding efficiency, but also the load of environment by avoiding excessive feeding. Maintaining the marine environment means maintaining the “domestic brand.”

In fact, the aquaculture industry is the best place to integrate digital and analog, and the initiative of the green aquaculture is important, as well. Originally, the aquaculture industry is characterized by lower GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions than other agricultural production businesses. Therefore, if we can achieve Carbon Neutrality ahead of the rest of the world in response to the movement toward local green power, the probability of obtaining added value through synergies with the domestic brand will increase. The formula can be expressed as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{“Domestic Brand”} \times \text{“Smart Aquaculture”} \times \text{“Green Aquaculture”} \\ & = \text{“Sustainable Growth of Aquaculture Business”} \end{aligned}$$

An essential component of this model is backed by the certification from a globally recognized certification body. While we operate in the supply chain of the fishing industry and are the beneficiaries of MEL, we also have a responsibility to work with MEL to create the movement for sustainable use of marine resources that involved with consumers. By building a strong business model that we can be proud of in the world, and by marketing the products produced in such way into overseas markets in unison with MEL, and through these activities, the status of MEL in the global market will further increase, and as a result, our business model will be strengthened.

Written by Mr. Yasumasa Kashiwagi

4. Practice of Certified Product and Promotion

In the last month edition of MEL News, we reported the expansion of MEL CoC certification in the retail industry. Mr. Kazuki Yuyama, senior supervisor of Marche Dpt. of Ito-Yokado, informed us of the launch of Seven Premium Fresh.

“New challenges for MEL as Seven & i Group”

We have been selling products with “Marine Eco-Label” at the stores since April last year. Until this June, only Ito Yokado had been implementing MEL within the group, but since this July, York Benimaru in Tohoku and North Kanto regions and York in Tokyo Metropolitan region, both of which are another retail companies within the group, succeeded in obtaining the certification, and at that time, the three companies jointly introduced “Natsu Buri (Yellowtail in Summer)” of Seven Premium Fresh (store brand) as a limited time program.

The purchasing staff or merchandiser of the three companies prepared for the joint program about one and half years ago. After visiting the farming places and confirming the

processing at the plants, we successfully launched it this summer. Above all, as the first-year trial, we planned to produce about 40,000 to 45,000 fish (Hiburijima, Ehime Prefecture), and the results were mostly in line with the plan. From the next-year, we will strengthen the joint development for increasing new species and products.



Seven Premium Fresh Yellowtail in Summer at Store

Written by Kazuki Yuyama

5. "MEL Eco-Bag": Going to Africa!

With good reputation as a novelty good, "MEL Eco-Bag" has travelled all the way to Cote d'Ivoire, West Africa. Ms. Yuriko Shiraishi, managing director of Woman's Forum Sakana and member of MEL Advisory Board, has been supporting female fishermen in Cote d'Ivoire for the past ten years and visited there and presented the bag to the local community last July. The theme of this year's event was "independent support through surimi processing technology," and we received the report that the eco-bag was distributed to participants in the workshop held in Abidjan, which encouraged them to get interested in marine eco-label. Despite the COVID-19, we are very impressed to hear that it would be held in autumn this year.



Shiraishi-san hands over the bag

West Africa used to be the major fishing ground for Japanese trawlers. the history of local consumption resulted from domestic distribution of the fishery catch became the base for fish consumption there, which in turn led to the export of Mackerel from Japan today. I hope that MEL will be recognized in Africa as well as Mackerel from Japan.

EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has released the special report in August. Regarding the impact of global warming, the report said the 1.5°C increase above the

pre-industrial level will occur ten years earlier than the previous forecast in 2018. The report said it will take an excessive amount of time to return the earth to its original state, even if the temperature rise can be stopped. This year's Marine Day, 19th July, was unnoticed because of the Tokyo Olympics 2020, but we should think about how to protect the sea and do some action right now.

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

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