



MEL NEWS

Chub Mackerel

This month's
MEL certified
marine products



Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

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Dear MEL Partners:

Mr. Fumio Kishida was elected as the 100th Prime Minister of Japan amid a mountain of challenges. At this juncture of 80 years since the outbreak of the World War II, I would ask myself what I should do when thinking about the future of Japan. I will try to suggest and act rather than criticizing.

In the manufacturing industry in Japan, which has been touted for its right work and high reliability, unbelievable irregularities in certification and inspection at major companies have been repeatedly reported. I feel the seriousness of problem because the certification system is based on the trust of society. It will be a good opportunity for MEL to brace ourselves together.

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

1. Status of MEL Certification

This month, there were seven certifications added: one for aquaculture and six for CoC. The pufferfish longline fishery, Munakata Fishery Cooperative in Fukuoka Prefecture, though it has already been noticed on our website, was revoked the certification with the consent of the certified entity since there is little prospect for the recovery of pufferfish stock condition This is the first case to see the certification is revoked. It is truly regrettable that we could not be of any support for them despite their efforts to obtain certification.

The aquaculture certification of oyster, Jigozen Fisheries Cooperative in Hiroshima Prefecture became effective at the end of this month. Following that, oyster processors and distributors are on the process of obtaining CoC certification. There are four kinds of certified shellfish after Japanese freshwater clam, surf clam and scallop. With the oyster season is just around the corner, we hope that they will enhance brand and presence as the MEL-certified oysters.

Yokohama Food Service Co., Ltd., which has a long track record as a seafood processor in the

Tokyo Metropolitan area, obtained CoC certification for not processing facilities, but its restaurant called “Yokohamaya Hompo Shokudo,” casual Japanese-style seafood restaurant. We expect that certification will be expanded onto foodservice operators with cooperation with retailers’ fresh fish and delicatessen sections. It is reported that “Yokohamaya Honpo” is preparing a poster announcement and the menu featuring MEL logomark.

2. Voice from Certified Entities

“What We Expect MEL Japan”

*Masato Yuasa, Representative Director and Chairman of
Mie Prefectural Federation of Fishery Association*

How can we survive with the people of “Hama” (fishery community) in the future? For us, an organization whose members are fishery cooperatives (single cooperatives) consisting of the members from fisheries and aquaculture in Mie Prefecture, this is a big theme at hand.

In the Showa period, the pearl culture, which took advantage of Mi’s complicated ria coastlines, enjoyed the prosperity. Then, Hamachi Yellowtail farming increased mainly in the southern part of the prefecture, and by the beginning of the Heisei period, it shifted to Red Sea Breams farming, which became one of the largest productions in Japan. During this period, amid rapid fluctuation of economic and social conditions, Mie Gyoren (Mie Prefectural Federation of Fishery Associations) has focused on strengthening the buyback program and developing the processing and distribution



Mr. Masato Yuasa

system to reach for large markets such as the Tokyo Metropolitan Area. Meantime, due to increase of cultured fish production nationwide, competition and price battle have intensified, and the business has been rising and falling repeatedly. We have also been dealing with the conflict between market need versus production sites, where opinions sometimes clashed.

As time goes by, feed has been changed to a formula feed, and outside the prefecture, cost reductions and quality improvements have been accelerated by taking advantage of the scale advantage of large-scale production. In the aquaculture industry in Mie, where the main aqua-producers are a small-scale base; each member still remains a spirit of fisherman, the demand for consistent and continued product quality has come to require more difficult responses. The aqua-producers on Hama cannot live without not only rearing fish but also converting fish into money. In Mie Prefecture, our organization plays an important role, and our response itself inevitably takes a role in revitalizing fishery communities and steering the business for the future.

In recent years, I feel that strengthening the system to fulfill this responsibility has become increasingly important.

Under these circumstances, an initiative was born to pursue originality in the production of “Ise Madai (Red Sea Breams)” which was certified as MEL in March, 2021. It was made through many discussions with aqua-producers individually, in cooperation with producer organizations, while considering their desired delivery schedules and sales conditions. This is a new business model developed by Mie Prefecture, which is different from general cooperative organization management in that it respects the management direction of each aqua-producer and combines production standards and exit strategies. In addition, we have come to believe that we must build a market-oriented business model collaborating with Hama in various forms to match the model with the characteristics of the production sites. And, last year, we established a yellowtail farming entity joint-ventured with a farming company. We plan to increase the number of MEL certification in the distribution and processing stages in accordance with actual conditions.

We are fully responsible for the processes at aqua-production, processing, shipping and sales. Ensuring sanitation and traceability, in order to make the general public fully aware of the sustainable use of fish stock and conservation of fishery environment, which is our daily routine, it is necessary to be able to objectively communicate with the society. MEL plays an important role in this process. We regard the acquisition of MEL certification, originated in Japan and recognized by the world, as not only a certification of marine products, but also an evaluation of the initiatives themselves. I sincerely hope that MEL will increase the opportunities for consumers to recognize Hama’s ambitious initiatives in the form of certification, and make even greater contributions to help us confidently send our messages to the world as well as to Japan. I am confident that this will help us overcome the challenges for the future of Hama.

3. Column

“Sea of Fertility and Sustainable Fisheries Certification”

*Gakushi Ishimura, Associate Professor of Iwate University,
Faculty of Agriculture Dept. of Food Production and Environmental Management*

The Engineering Academy of Japan's Proposal for Ocean Terroir defined the future image of the ocean as “Hojo no Umi” or “Sea of Fertility.” As “Gokoku Hojo” meaning a rich harvest shows, Hojo means that the land is fertile and crops are plentiful. The word of fertility does not imply the richness of foam that runs out of the fertility of the earth and makes it wasteland. It means there is a production harmonized with the nature that creates fertility, and a society where people create value in that harmony. It may evoke the impression of Yukio Mishima's novel of the same title of “Hojo no Umi.” However, the fact that the Engineering Academy of Japan defined it as Sea of Fertility is full of spirit that develops the history of this country into the sea, which has

cultivated the earth and enriched the country.

Science has pointed to the possibility of Sea of Fertility. In December of last year, the high-level panel for Sustainable Ocean Economy in which Japan actively participates, announced the International Ocean Agreement for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 14 for fish stocks. The scientific pillars of the agreement are global bioeconomic research and policy recommendations based on the results.



Mr. Gakushi Iwamura

By establishing scientifically based estimates of fish stocks and maximum sustainable biological production, and promoting orderly and sustainable harvest management and utilization, this study suggested the possibility that the expansion of food supply from the ocean and the accompanying expansion of economic activities will solve the world's food and economic problems in 2050. A similar study in 2019 found that sustainable stock utilization by estimating maximum sustainable biological production would bring 30% increase in domestic marine food production and three and a half times benefit to Japan in 50 years.

Science points that it would bring to the future of Sea of Fertility. The numbers itself would not show the future, but the course to the future that the scientific compass points out from the accumulated data and logic is inevitable for Japan, an island nation surrounded by the sea on all sides. Sea of Fertility is premised on the harmony between the fertility created by the nature and production activities. Everyone will feel the potential for its fertility if they are deeply involved with the sea. But if we take the first step toward fertile soil, the overwhelming invisibility and uncertainty of the sea will block our way.

Globally-recognized sustainable fisheries certifications, including MEL, are a nautical chart to Sea of Fertility and its confirmation. The two studies underscore the need for science-based sustainable stock management and orderly sustainable use of fish stock for the course of Sea of Fertility. Sustainable fishery certification is based on the criteria the stock of the target fishery is managed scientifically and the existing stock is used sustainably. As science advances to better understand the oceans and fish stocks, sustainable fisheries certification will keep pace with science by updating its standards. Aspiring to be certified would confirm a nautical chart of Sea of Fertility, and obtaining certification would confirm not only fishermen but also all people seeking Sea of Fertility. Among the overwhelming invisibility and uncertainty of the oceans, sustainable fishery certification is a guide to Sea of Fertility.

No matter how society changes in the next ten or one hundred years, if people live here, the country will be surrounded by the sea and will certainly exist. Could we call the sea as the Sea of Fertility? It is us who live here and now who decide the course for the future. Sustainable fishery certification plays an important role and has a responsibility for the path of Sea of Fertility.

4. Event Participation

• Dai-Maru-Yu SDGs Act 5

Mr. Naoya Kakizoe of MEL Japan Council participated in the event with Mr. Nobuo Nagatomo, president of Azuma-cho Fisheries Cooperative. The theme of event is to connect food industry people with consumers, and make a change on the future dining through sustainable food. It was a small event with 30 people in the hall and 70 people on the web. Following Kakizoe-san's presentation about MEL Japan and Nagamoto-san's about Azuma-cho, the talk show was held by the three people, Kakozoe-san, Nagatomo-san and Mis. Nao Mikami, famous nomadic chef. It was very nice atmosphere with tasting of "Buri-Oh" (Azuma-Cho's farmed Yellowtail brand) cooked by Mikami-san.

The participants seemed to be related to the companies located in financial and business districts of Ote-Machi, Marunouchi and Yuraku-cho – Tokyo's Midtown and Wall Street - and it was very impressed to see them all taking notes. All of their comments and questions were well-directed, which I felt that Japan is steadily creating a consumer participatory society. We have received positive feedback from people who watched it online, and hope that this opportunity will help increase consumer awareness of MEL certified products. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all those who have taken up MEL certification and contributed to this program.



EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT

Thank you, Yuasa-san! It was very impressive of Mie Model and initiative with spirit of "Hama," hand-crafted together with fishery communities. Mie Gyoren has been supported MEL Japan since its foundation and actively involved with business development of marketing, R&D and distribution with affiliated fishery cooperatives and business partners along with obtaining CoC certification by themselves.

Ishimura-san is an internationally active researcher on Japan's fishery resource economy. Now, the Sea of Fertility is in danger, we will continue make further efforts together with those who have obtained the certification to make small contribution to restoring our desire for the fertility.

*It is reported that the red tide that damages chum salmon and sea urchin in eastern Hokkaido is caused by cold-water *Karenia brevis*, but *Karenia mikimotoi*, which caused severe damage to aquaculture in western Japan, has also been found there. So, it is frightening to think that it is caused by global warming. Professor Syukuro Manabe, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 2021, had already predicted the greenhouse effect of carbon dioxide in 1967, but it took more than a quarter of a century for human beings to take action.*

Because of lifting of the state of emergency and preventive measures, we began to feel the momentum of people's movements, and cities and markets as well. Hope you will be well prepared for the end of the biggest business opportunity.

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