



# MEL NEWS

Pacific Bluefin Tuna

This month's  
MEL certified  
marine products



Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

## MEL NEWS VOL. 46 (ENGLISH EDITION)

Dear MEL Partners:

Happy New Year everyone! MEL also celebrated its sixth New Year since the restart. As the sixth wave of covid-19 spreads at an alarming rate, the new year, which began with a strong yen and lowing stock prices, is shaping up to be a stormy year in which a wide range of product and service price increases await, and the outlook for the new year is becoming quite unpredictable. I would like to keep the spirit of "Sustainability is Creativity" (Etsuko Takano, General Manager of Iwanami Hall) and work hard with you.

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

### 1. Status of MEL Certification

The number of certified cases this month was one aquaculture and one CoC, two in total: Hyosyoku's yellowtail aquaculture in Kochi Prefecture and Nichimo Foods' wholesaling operation for Coho Salmon farmed by its

group company called Nichimo Mari-Culture based in Miyagi Prefecture. The number is only two, but there are a lot of applicants right before certification, so we expect it to happen next month.

### 2. Voice from Certified Entities:

**"The Future of Local Communities Developed by "Ainan's Red Sea Breams)"**

**Hiroki Tachibana, Chairman of Ainan Fisheries Cooperative Association**

Ainan Fisheries Cooperative Association based in Ainan Town, Ehime Prefecture was established in 2005 through the merger of seven fisheries cooperatives in Ainan Town. Fishing vessels, fish aquaculture, and shellfish aquaculture are the three pillars of our business. In particular, our farming business

accounts for nearly 20% of the total aquaculture production of Red Sea Breams in Japan, and we are one of the top aquaculture areas in Japan.

Last year (2021) was the year where we were able to make efforts to revitalize the local

community amid the coronavirus disaster, such as the sales of "Red Sea Bream Cutlet Burger" in cooperation with Mos Food Service. Since acquiring MEL certification, we have worked with major trading companies, restaurant chains, mass merchandisers, and others in sales. Even in Japan, the recognition of MEL certification is low, so it is difficult to link MEL with sales directly, but we will continue to promote MEL certification and work on increasing sales.

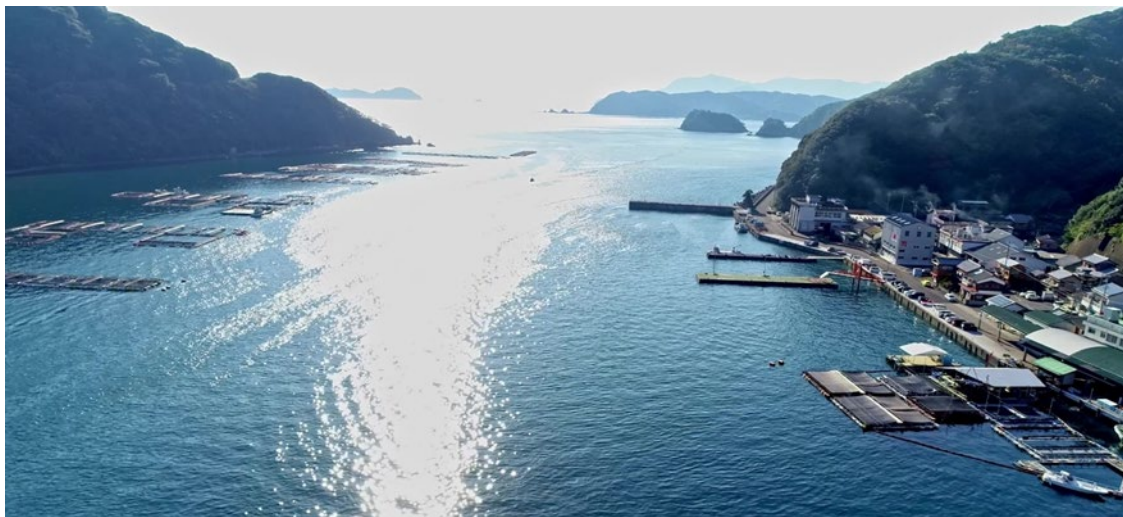
In addition to the sales aspect, there are other things that have changed influenced by MEL certification. In the past, each member had been working on sustainable aquaculture with attention to environment independently, but our organization's flag-waving and initiatives seems to have changed the attitudes of the members and employees. At present, our cooperative association exports fish to North America. With the aim of producing fish that is trusted even overseas, we are working to enhancing the evidentiary

of food safety by conducting unannounced chemical residue tests and increasing the number of points and frequency of water quality surveys (heavy metals).

In addition, in order to reduce the environmental impact at the farming stage, we introduce waste float reduction containers this year. Ainan Town's main industry is the fishing industry. Our organization upheld the SDGs Declaration in 2021, and we will continue our efforts to make our business a truly sustainable industry.



Tachibana-san and Miura-san



Ainan Town and Fishing Ground with Panoramic View of Pacific Ocean

### **3. Column:**

#### ***"How Fisheries Certification Is Seen in the Eyes of Fijians"***

***Minoru Tamura, Experts from the Japan International Cooperation Agency  
(Marine Stock Management)***

***Department of Agriculture, Geography, Oceans and Natural Sciences,  
University of the South Pacific***

*"What did you have for breakfast? Has anyone eaten fish?". Showing local students slides of rice, Nori seaweed, Wakame seaweed miso soup, Hijiki seaweed and grilled salt salmon for the students at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji, I say, "This is a very common breakfast in Japan. I will talk about the seafood industry in the country where people eat seafood from the morning." and they are ready to listen.*

*From the eyes of many people overseas, the Japanese fishery industry looks very interesting. It features a wide variety of fish species, fishing ports, fish markets and seafood restaurants throughout the country, local fishing gears and methods, advanced sanitation management, and cutting-edge technologies in aquaculture and processing. Historically and traditionally, the Nihonbashi Uogashi (fish market) depicted in Ukiyoe (Japanese woodblock prints) has developed into today's Toyosu Fish Market, and Japanese cuisine, which seafood is indispensable, was registered as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, and Satoumi, a place where people and nature coexist, has been recognized worldwide. These remind us that Japanese have a deep connection with fish and sea.*

*By the way, the Midwest Pacific, where Fiji is situated, is a major fishing ground for tuna,*

*and the offshore tuna fishery is a major industry. At the 2017 United Nations Conference on the Ocean, the Government of Fiji committed to MSC certification for at least 75% of the tuna longline vessels belonging to the Fiji Fishing Industry Association, and today more than 50% of them are MSC-certified. While certified tunas are traded at premium prices in Western countries, they are never seen in the island. In recent years, the acquisition of MSC certification has been accelerated through the funds provided by development assistance organizations in Europe and the United States as well as international NGOs as measures against IUU fishing. Furthermore, local fishermen cannot cover the costs of the annual assessment, so this is also dependent on external funds.*

*Of course, from the perspective of global stock management, such efforts are welcome. Fijians, on the other hand, rarely see certified fishery products, and governments and fishermen rely on external funds for premium prices in Western markets. It does not appear that local people completely lose their independence in stock management through certification systems.*

*GSSI-recognized MEL certifications are based on scientific and objective facts and required strict transparency of the assessment process*

*and outcomes. At the same time, we would see MEL, originated in Japan, communicates to the world recognizing there are something that is hard to quantify the relationship between people rooted in the regions with history and tradition, fish and the sea.*

*When we introduce MEL to the Fiji Ministry of Fisheries, they are first surprised to know that there are other fisheries certification schemes outside the United States and Europe. On top of that, it is very empathetic for Japan to be able to conduct its own stock management by its own system the Japanese should*

*communicate more about MEL to the world - they tell me. The gradual spread of MEL's international and Japanese lessons to the rest of the world may lead to a more proactive approach to stock management in a growing number of countries, triggered by evaluation on the relationship between fish and the sea and people that cannot be quantified and taken root in each country. I hope that it would not so far away to see the day when we can talk about the fishery industry in the country where many certified fishery products are on the table.*



*Remote Class at University of the South Pacific (Mr. Tamura, the second from the left)*

#### **4. MEL Workshops**

##### **1) Workshop in Toyama**

*MEL workshop was held on January 12, cosponsored by the Japan Fisheries Association and Toyama City Fisheries Promotion Council, for the members of the Toyama City Fisheries Cooperative Association. 20 local fishermen, prefectural officials, and members of the*

*Fisheries Cooperative Association participated in the workshop and exchanged enthusiastic opinions on obtaining MEL certification for white shrimp and firefly squid. The representatives of MEL Japan also visited Uozu Fisheries Cooperative Association,*

*Shinminato Fisheries Cooperative Association, and Toyama Local Fish Market to ask about the market situation and sustainable initiatives. Toyama Bay, together with Suruga Bay, has a unique ecosystem, and we intend to deepen discussions from various angles on how MEL could help ensure the sustainable use of its stock.*



*MEL Workshop at Toyama-Iwase Branch*

## **2) MEL Workshop 2022**

*As the special event of fifth years since the starts of the new MEL Japan, we are preparing to hold a workshop to discuss how to make the marine eco-label even more useful and valuable from the viewpoint of consumers and ordinary people. Due to prevention of infection, only speakers and panelist will be invited to the venue, and everyone is welcome to participate in online streaming.*

- Date and time: February 16, 2022 1pm - 4pm*
- Venue: Ishigaki Memorial Hall*
- Online Streaming: YouTube Live*
- Speaker: Mr. Hideaki Yamaguchi, former*

*Director-General of the Fisheries Agency, gives a keynote speech.*

*- Discussion Theme: "Observing sustainable Japan's fishery and fish-eating culture from the perspective of consumers, let's talk about the role and value of marine eco-labeling."*

*We will present the menus of certified seafood and these recipes at the hall. The detail is available in MEL Japan's website. No prior registration is required for the online streaming in advance. We look forward to seeing many of you soon.*

## **EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT**

*Thank you, Tachibana-san, I would like to express my respect for the positive efforts of Ainan Fisheries Cooperative Association. Let's work together to make MEL certification more useful to you and Ainan Town community. Tamura-san, the atmosphere in Fiji was very familiar to me. I look forward to your continued guidance so that MEL can contribute to these countries.*

*A huge eruption occurred in Tonga in the South Pacific Ocean, and a tsunami hit the Pacific Rim countries. It reminded me of the Chile Tsunami caused by the biggest earthquake in history that occurred in Chile in May 1960. I am once again in awe of the power of nature and distressed by the damage on the fisheries industry throughout the country.*

*Next month, MEL is planning several events such as MEL Workshop 2022, customer conference calls and others including preparation for the revision of GSSI's Benchmark Tool. In the sixth wave where the spread of infection will not stop, but we will do our best to keep on our missions.*

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