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Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

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Dear MEL Partners:

In the midst of the gruesome Russian military invasion of Ukraine, we are reminded of the words of the ancient Greek historian Herodotus: "History is a record of human folly." I first visited Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, 24 years ago in August 1998. It was only a few days, but after the end of the Cold War between the East and the West, people's eyes were shining in the midst of the birth pains to become an independent country. If it is Russia's outrageous act after suffering various hardships, not only the people of Ukraine but also the international community cannot live with "human stupidity."

Ukraine, which was still a poor region in the Middle Soviet Union, had been in charge of a deep-sea fishery and even an Antarctic whaling fleet, I remember seeing a fish store in the city of Kiev, called "Okean," with stingrays and carp displayed together with Alaskan pollock, orioles (ice fish) and krill. I hope that a peaceful day can be restored as soon as possible.

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 five CoC, six in total: I cannot blame it on the pandemic and the peer review system, but I am concerned that

the issuance of certification has been delayed. We are trying to solve the traffic jam by asking the people concerned about each case.

2. Standard Setting Committee

The Standards Setting Committee for Aquaculture was held on March 15 to revise MEL AMS Ver. 1.0. In addition to the members of the Standards Committee, Mr. Maita, a member of the Expert Committee,

also attended the meeting. In response to the prohibition of use of raw feed required by GSSI Benchmark Tool Ver. 2.0, a partial revision has made to the current criterion 4.2, which states "Feed shall be used to

properly optimize the health of aquaculture animals as well as to minimize impact of natural resources.” The MEL's basic stance is aiming to shift to solid compound feed in the future and require certified producers to implement that. We will take a stance to improve the system by clearly indicating the conditions of use in consideration of the actual business conditions of producers. To revise the standards, the decision of the Standards Committee must be made public on the website, followed by an explanation to the certified entities and certification bodies, and a public comment for 60 days.

After the final adjustment, an important procedure is required: final explanation to the certified parties, report to the Board, and approval by the General Meeting. Since this revision specifically restricts the use of moist pellets on regular basis, we would like to devote sufficient time to discussions to reflect the actual situation of those who obtained certification. The revised standards are scheduled to come into effect in mid-July. As we believe that the current standards of Fishery and CoC can be workable, we will not consult with the Standard Setting Committee.

3. Voice from Certified Entities:

“For the future of Japanese anchovy fishing in Osaka Bay”

Takeshi Naka, Chairman of Osaka Resource Management Boat Seine Committee

Osaka Resource Management Boat Seine Committee consists of all fishermen in Osaka who engage in the boat seine fishery, which is the only fishery in Osaka Bay catching “shirasu”, juvenile fish of anchovies and sardines.

maintained stable catches.

In recent years, we have collected the landing ports of anchovies of Osaka Bay at a single auction site in Kishiwada City, and have been promoting the use of ICT to shorten auction time and thoroughly manage freshness.

Japanese anchovy is a fish species which catch fluctuates greatly, because it is easily affected by transportation from the open sea, and spawning and growth conditions in Osaka Bay. In order to minimize such fluctuations, we have voluntarily set unified fishing holidays, opening and closing dates, and operating hours. We have also worked together with fishermen in Hyogo Prefecture, due to the co-utilization of fishing areas of the other, with repeated discussions, have been making efforts to unify the management measures in Osaka Bay for many years, and have

Recognizing the international growing importance of the sustainable utilization of marine resources, we decided to seek MEL certification in 2017 in anticipation of the Tokyo Olympics. Until we received our certification, we had to collect a large amount of scientific evidence and records of our fisheries management, and adapt to the Ver. 2.0 of the MEL fisheries standard which caused us some confusion. However, we were finally able to receive production stage certification in June 2020. For a while after our certification, there were no companies

that received the CoC (Chain of Custody) certification for Osaka Bay anchovy, but we are very pleased to see that, by early 2022, “shirasu” products bearing the MEL logo mark are finally available on consumers' tables.

I feel that recognition of MEL is still low, so I would like to ask all stakeholders to spread MEL certified products in the future, and I would like to make efforts so that consumers can appreciate our efforts for sustainable



Operation of boat seine fishery in Osaka Bay

utilization of fishery resources.

4. Column:

“Aiming for Sustainable Fishery Distribution”

Yutaka Hayama, Chairman of Tokyo Fish Market Retailers Union

Tokyo Fish Market Retailers Union consists of fishery intermediate wholesalers at Toyosu Market, and is a business cooperative with 470 partner offices. This year marks the 70th anniversary of our founding. Now that we have successfully completed the Toyosu relocation project, it is time to seriously consider the future of the market.

In the past two years, due to the impact of the declaration of the state of emergency in response to the spread of COVID-19, we have made every effort to continue the functioning of the market, despite suffering greatly. And now in the recent, the situation in Ukraine has

become increasingly tense, and we are facing new challenges such as the impact on food imports. In addition to these external factors, there are issues about how market distribution should respond to the decrease in some fishery resources and changes in the marine environment.

The Union invites outside experts to Toyosu Market and holds symposiums and workshops on the themes of fishery resources and the marine environment, providing a forum for members to share their awareness of issues. (The details are posted on the Tokyo Fish Market Retailers Union website.)

Some companies have acquired MEL certification, which is an effective means of protecting marine resources. MEL products are now ready for distribution at Toyosu Market, but the challenge is to promote the spread of MEL CoC certification among food services and medium-sized supermarkets, which are the main customers of intermediate wholesalers. We will continue to work with the Marine Ecolabel Japan Council to promote

sustainable use of marine resources.

As part of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's Wholesale Market Promotion Project next fiscal year, panels including the Marine Eco-Label will be displayed in the visitor corridor of Toyosu Market. In addition, the status of MEL-certified entities will be posted in the SDGs section of the website of the Toyosu Market Association.



*Tokyo Fish Market Retailers Union workshop
(The fourth person from the left is Chairman Hayama.)*

5. New Products:

JCCU launches 18 Shirasu (Japanese anchovy) products with MEL mark

**Satoshi Matsumoto,
Sustainability Strategy Office Brand Strategy Headquarters of
Japan Consumers' Co-operative Union**

The Japan Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU) is a nationwide association that includes co-op associations in various regions as well as co-op associations by prefecture and business category. As part of our product business, we develop co-op products for private brands and supply them to co-ops nationwide.

18 items (SKU), including "COOP Fluffy Shirasu-boshi (semi-dried young anchovies)," which is made of boiled and semi-dried young anchovies and sardines, and packaged in small portions for easy use, are marked with the MEL logo. The products will be released sequentially in March 2022 as part of the "Co-op Sustainable" and "Protecting the Resources

of the Sea" series, which are environmentally and socially conscious products.

These products are widely used by co-op members nationwide, and with a proven track record of supplying approximately 22 million servings (in small packs) annually through home delivery and retail stores, the number of co-op products bearing the MEL logo will expand rapidly.

The Osaka Resource Management Boat Seine Committee (Osaka Bay) and the Kii Channel Central Boat Seine Association acquired MEL certification with their shirasu boat seine fisheries in 2020. In order to obtain understanding from the fishermen, we visited the sites with the MEL Council to explain about the certification to fishermen.

In addition, in order to sell shirasu-boshi products with the MEL logo mark, JCCU will work with Nishimura & Co., Ltd., a subcontractor for processing and packaging, and a raw material broker in Osaka for the distribution and processing stage. We obtained CoC certification as multi-site in 2020.

I strongly felt that cooperation of many parties involved in the fishery, distribution, processing and other stages was important before a product was put on the market with the MEL logo mark. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your cooperation.

In May last year, JCCU announced the "Basic Policy for Responsible Procurement" and "2030 Targets for Co-op Products". The JCCU has set a target of increasing the proportion of certified seafood products to 50% or more by 2030, based on a certification scheme approved by the GSSI, for our private brand products and fresh products supplied by JCCU. We will continue to work toward the sustainable use of seafood produced in Japan.



Products in Shelf of COOP Store

*For more information on the "COOP SUSTAINABLE" series, please visit the following website.
<https://goods.jccu.coop/lineup/sustainable/>

6. Events and Workshops:

1) FOODEX JAPAN 2022

This month's event was "FOODEX JAPAN 2022" from March 8 to 11th at Makuhari Messe. This is an international food exhibition that represents Japan.

MEL was a bit far away from this event, but I felt that interests in the Marine Eco-Label was growing as more people than ever stopped by our booth to ask for

explanations.

What stood out from the exhibitors was the enthusiasm of those involved in the new food material, alternative meat. In addition to introducing various initiatives for

2) MEL Workshop 2022

MEL Workshop 2022, which was held on 16th of last month, has continued to gain access to YouTube, reaching 580 view counts. The following are some of the messages sent by the people involved via blogs and Instagram.

Blog post by MEL advisory board member Hiroshi Terashima (posted on March 10)

The workshop started with a speech by Mr. Kazuhiko Utsumi (Executive Director of Japan Fisheries Association). A keynote speech by Hideaki Yamaguchi (former Director-General of the Fisheries Agency), a business report by Chairman of MEL Kakizoe, there was a video message from the Alaska RSM (Alaska's Responsible Fishery Management Certification Program), followed by a discussion looking at sustainable Japanese fisheries and fish-eating culture from the perspective of consumers.

Mr. Hiroyuki Matsuda, a professor at Yokohama National University, acted as facilitator, and the panelists were Narumi

FOODTECH, proposals for vegans (Vegetarians = people who do not eat animal products such as meat, fish, eggs, and dairy products) are also prominent, and I believe that the diversification of diet will rapidly advance.

Shimura (Director of ABC Cooking Studio Co., Ltd.), Yuriko Shiiba (Director of TV Man Union), and Mari Ako (Author, Graduate School of Life and History). In addition, 20 people participated from the venue or remotely, including fishermen, aquaculture, distribution, processing, and MEL ambassadors.

In order for the Marine Eco Label (MEL), which is the Japanese seafood eco-label, to be widely used in Japan and abroad, I have always believed that it is important for ordinary people, who are final consumers of marine products, to recognize its significance and importance and to actively purchase marine products bearing the MEL mark, and I have made a few comments to that effect. From that point of view, the comments and discussions of various people in this workshop were quite good. It was worth attending despite the fear of the corona-virus."

The entire blog can be found at <https://blog.canpan.info/terashima/>.

EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT

Thank you, Naka-san from the Osaka Resource Management Boat Seine Committee.

In February 2022, as part of its efforts to promote SDGs and ethical consumption, the JCCU launched a new series, "Co-op Sustainable". I asked Mr. Satoshi Matsumoto, who is in charge of promotion and on the board of directors of MEL, to talk about Shirasu, the first product with the MEL logo. We are very pleased to be able to deliver MEL certified products from fishing to processing and sales to co-op members all over the country. I wish for further development in the future.

In the Kinki region, the catch of sea lance, which is a spring tradition, remained poor in Osaka Bay and the Harimanada Sea, and the fishery was closed voluntarily this year. Fishermen have also banned fishing in Ise Bay and Mikawa Bay, reportedly for seven consecutive years. There have been various indications about the cause, but I am keenly aware of the difficulty of conserving food culture while utilizing resources sustainably, since this is a fish species that is closely related to the local life of the region.

On the other hand, it has been repeatedly reported that herring resources have been restored to the extent that swarms of spawning herrings have been seen in Ishikari Bay, Hokkaido. I heard that the efforts to recover resources are finally paying off. And what is the difference between the sea lance and herring, which are both similar northern fish species? In the fisheries industry, where resources are greatly affected by factors other than human efforts, it is frustrating to realize that the actions of business operators, such as voluntary management, do not lead to the recovery of resources. However, I would like to express my respect for the patience of those who are involved in the "Continuity is Power" relationship.

MEL News has been in existence for four years with your support, and today I bring you the 48th issue. We will continue to do our best to function as a useful information sharing tool as "Japan-Made, World-Acknowledged Marine Eco-Label".

Even though the Quasi-State of Emergency is expired, spring is the season when you tend to get sick easily. Due care and be prepared for the upcoming fiscal year!

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