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Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

## MEL NEWS VOL. 54 (ENGLISH EDITION)

Dear MEL Partners:

*Drought and heavy rains are spreading across the world, which is likely to add to the food shortage caused by the conflict in Ukraine. In May last year, Japan formulated the “Green Food System Strategy”, which aims to improve the productivity and sustainability of food, agriculture, forestry, and fishery products, and is moving to strengthen self-sufficiency in the entire supply chain. As you know, 100% artificial seedling is claimed to Japanese eel and bluefin tuna aquaculture. Increasing expectations for the fishery industry will lead to the use of the Marine Eco-Label.*

*On the other hand, the trend toward price hikes has been spreading even further since autumn, and there is a need to reform the industrial structure from the viewpoint of livelihood defense. There is also increasing social pressure on how MEL can contribute to this trend.*

### **1. Status of MEL Certification**

*The number of new certified entities this month was two for aquaculture, three for CoC; five in total. As a special note, the Hokkaido Ishikari Bay herring gill net fishery was certified on August 24. I would like to express my respect to the government, research institutions and businesses for their long and patient efforts. The certification is for the Ishikari Bay group, which is genetically different from the Hokkaido Sakhalin group, the main group from the Edo period to the Meiji period. I am glad to hear that, but I wonder what happened to the Sakhalin group, which once supported the Hokkaido economy by catching 1 million*

*tons. Although we cannot be optimistic about the state of the ocean, such as the rise in the sea water temperature, this is an initiative that has demonstrated the significance of protecting resources, and we wish for a long and successful future as MEL's representative certification. If you are interested, open the website of Japan Fisheries Resource Conservation Association and you can see the review report of the Ishikari Bay herring gillnet fishery. On August 26, MEL certification ceremony was held at the Japan International Seafood Show. This was the 10th certification ceremony. Six companies participated, and*

*representatives from each company expressed their enthusiasm for the revival of Japan's fishery industry and the expansion of*

*Eco-Label certification. I wish you all the best.*



## **2. Progress in Multiplexing Certification Bodies**

*The issue of multiple certification bodies, one of the key policies for MEL, has been progressing steadily over time. Currently, The Marine Ecology Research Institute (MERI) is working on this project, but in parallel with the establishment of an in-house system as a certification body for aquaculture and CoC, and the training of audits, a series of processes for JAB certification are at their peak. The primary examination has already been completed, and local examination results of 2 aquaculture and 2 CoC are required in the*

*secondary examination, and preparations are being made with the cooperation of Japan Fisheries Resource Conservation Association and the applicant for certification.*

*The key point is the certification of JAB, which examines the ability of the certification body to conduct examinations. It is expected that the multiple certification bodies will be realized from next spring with the addition of MERI.*

### 3. Events

① *At the Japan International Food Show (August 24 to 26)*

*We exhibited at the Fisheries Eco-Label Corner. We explained visitors interested in MEL certification, as well as displayed a variety of certified products. At the eco-label corner, six companies, 7 & i Holdings, Fukuichi Fishery, Takahashi Shoten, Dainichi, Okamura Food Industry, and Yonkyu, exhibited their products, and their booths were crowded throughout the day due to synergistic effects. Overseas scheme owners MSC and BAP (GSA) were also on display.*

② *We exhibited at the Food Store Solution Fair (September 7 to 8) held in Osaka. This is the second time we have participated in this exhibition, and I felt that interest in the marine ecolabel of the target supermarkets in Kansai is gradually increasing.*

③ *Participated in Seafood Expo Asia 2022 held in Singapore from September 14 to 16. This is an event in which the Japan Fisheries Association participates and exhibits in the planning of the Great*

*MEL Association, which is designated as the operator of the "Project for Establishing a Sustainable Marine Resource Utilization System," a Fisheries Agency subsidiary project. Senior Managing Director Nagaoka, Secretary General Kanno, and others attended, and took the stage at the seminar to present the current situation of Japan to the stakeholders of Asian countries. In Asia, the interest in marine product ecolabels is increasing, the number of MEL-certified marine products exported from Japan has been increasing and thriving.*

④ *We will participate in TSSS 2022 organized by Seafood Regency and Nikkei BP on October 19 -21. In addition to exhibiting to report on MEL activities, I will also be on stage with MSC, ASC and GSA (BAP) at the 20 session "Certification Scheme Owners ' New Challenges " (15: 45 – 16: 45 on 20th). Registration for participation has started, so if you are interested, please register on the Seafood Regency website. The participation fee is 5500 yen per person for 3 days.*

### 4.Voice from Certified Entities:

#### **'Gujo ayu fishery certified by MEL '**

① *Overview of Nagara River and Fisheries*

*Nagara River is a large river that originates from Mt. Dainichi at the foot of Mt. Hakusan located in the mid-western*

#### **Gujo Fisheries Cooperative Association President Jirō Shirataki**

*part of Gifu prefecture and flows from north to south. Its main stream extends for over 160 km and flows through Kuwana City, Mie Prefecture to Ise Bay. The Gujo Fisheries Cooperative is in*

*charge of the Nagara River main branch in Gujo City, which is located in the uppermost part of the river. In the upper reaches of the Nagara River, a traditional*

*fishing method for ayu with decoy in streams called "Gujo Fishing" has emerged.*



## *② History of Gujo Ayu Distribution and MEL Certification*

*The ayu caught in the upper reaches of Nagara River are called "Gujo ayu" after the name of their producing area, and distributed with a special ranking. A distribution system called the "joint shipping business" made the name of Gujo ayu widely known. Joint shipment means not selling the fish caught by one person as it is, but collecting the fish caught by many anglers and selling them with added value by uniformizing the size, freshness, etc. Currently, it is rare in Japan that a fisheries cooperative operates a joint shipment business of natural ayu, and only Gujo Fisheries Cooperative in*

*Gifu Prefecture.*

*In February of this year, Ayu Decoy Fishing in Gujo was able to obtain the "Marine Eco-Label Japan Fishing Industry Certification Standard Ver.2" fishing certification, which is an international standard marine product eco-label certification. As of January this year, the Gujo Fishery Cooperative is the first freshwater fishery in Japan to be certified. Perhaps due to the MEL effect, this year's shipment of Gujo Ayu is on the verge of setting a record. At the same time, I keenly felt that in order to maintain this certification, it is necessary to make further efforts, such as permanent resource management and the*

development of an environment to make this possible.

### ③ Increasing Natural Ayu Resources

In Nagara River, there are two types of ayu resources: the natural ayu that comes up from Ise Bay and the released ayu by fisheries cooperatives in the basin. Some of the natural ayu that comes up from Ise Bay have a large impact on the amount of resources and catches in rivers. To increase natural ayu resources, seven fisheries cooperatives in the watershed have been working together on hatching and releasing fertilized eggs.

Regarding the origin of released ayu seedlings, we are working to release marine F1 seedlings produced by the Gifu Prefectural Fish and Seedling Center, which can prevent genetic disturbance and contribute to reproduction. Seafood F1 is often associated with crossbreeds, but the parent fish, both male and female, are caught in rivers and can be said to be very close to natural seeds. Uncaught released fish are expected to participate in spawning activities in rivers as parent fish, contributing to the increase of ayu stocks in the following year. This method of release is called the "Nagara River method of release," and is now attracting attention from fisheries cooperatives around the country that have rivers with natural run-up.

In order for good ayu to grow, it is necessary to have a river flowing with water that maintains good water quality to nurture good quality attached algae

that feed ayu. And that water flows out of the mountain. In 2010, the Gujo Fishery Cooperative launched a broad-leaved tree planting activity under the name of the "Nagara River Headwaters Forest Development Project" and has continued this activity every year since.

### ④ Training of successors and succession of traditional fishing methods

In the world of fishing and fishing, the aging of society and the shortage of successors are unavoidable problems. There is no sustainable succession of fisheries without the continuation of various traditional fishing methods. Although efforts have been made to increase the fishing population by holding various workshops and events such as fishing competitions for young people and fishing beginners, the reality is that there is no end in sight, but the development of successors is an important issue that must be prioritized above all else and must be addressed with all means.

### ⑤ To conclude

In order to promote a stable and continuous ayu fishery, we must listen to the voices of not only fishermen but also recreational fishermen and people in the watershed, and work hand in hand with everyone involved in rivers and fish to move toward the future, while exploring the ideal form of fisheries cooperatives. This MEL certification made me think about that. I would like to ask for your continued support and guidance.

## **5.Column**

**"We will restore Ishinomaki, an international fishing city."**

**Ishinomaki City Fisheries Promotion Association**

**Chairman Kunio Suno**

*Ishinomaki's fishery industry was devastated by the Great East Japan Earthquake 11 years ago, but thanks to support from the national government and various sectors, Ishinomaki was able to revitalize itself with mutual encouragement under the slogan "International City of Fisheries Ishinomaki."*

*However, the fishery industry is currently in the most critical situation since World War II, with poor catches of important fish species, sluggish consumption due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and energy shortages caused by the conflict in Ukraine.*

*Fortunately, we in Tohoku were given hope in this situation. Sendai Ikuei High School won the championship in this summer's Koshien tournament and went over Shirakawa of the championship flag of crimson.*

*Coach SUE trained five aces to lighten the burden on the players and used strategic tactics to prevent the opponents from getting used to the ball quality. Regular athletes were assigned roles according to their individual abilities, and enough reserve players were developed. As a coach, I believe that the team won the championship as a result of our daily*

*efforts to improve the collective strength of the team by communicating well with each other, sharing goals, and raising motivation. We learned many lessons from "Sueism".*

*I think you can raise your motivation to work by establishing a common goal for human resource development in the company and confirming your current position. It should be possible to enhance regional power by strengthening cooperation among companies in the region by taking advantage of the characteristics of each company.*

*In Ishinomaki, for the construction of a new fish market, we tend to think of using a small space with ingenuity, but the idea of HACCP among Westerners was that we should have some leeway to avoid cross-contamination, so we landed, displayed, and sold the fish by type of fishery (by fishing method), resulting in a landing building of about 880 m, which was certified by Guinness as the world's longest.*

*In order to increase Ishinomaki's name recognition, the brand name (oysters, cod, salmon, angler, etc.) was changed to aquacultured coho salmon in spring, skipjack in summer, mackerel in*

autumn and pot dish in winter. In addition, Miyagi Salmon is designated as a G-I by the national government, and G-I of Kinka Saba(mackerel) is under consideration.

The global trend is to create sustainable products with consideration for environmental conservation, but unfortunately, the Ishinomaki area has not yet acquired an internationally certified marine product eco-label. Note: Nichimo Mariculture (Miyagi Nichimo

Aquaculture Cowherd Group of Ishinomaki Sales Office) has acquired MEL aquaculture certification.

I humbly reflect on the delay in the realization of "International City of Fisheries - Ishinomaki," which was the initial goal at the time of reconstruction, and I will work as a flag-bearer to learn from "Sue-ism" and become an international city of fisheries both in name and reality.



### **EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT**

Thank you, Shirataki san. I could feel the strong feelings of the union president and everyone involved towards Gujo ayu. We look forward to your continued efforts to preserve natural resources and pass on culture to the local community.

Thank you Suno san. We were able to feel the strong desire of all of you for Ishinomaki International City of Fisheries. I pray for the further development of Suno

*san and everyone in Ishinomaki.*

*Use MEL to make your dreams come true.*

*The corporate price index for August was 115.1, up 9.0% from the same month a year earlier, marking 18 consecutive months of year-on-year growth. Not only resources, but also rising costs are creating a difficult situation for our business to continue, and I am sure that you will have a headache. I hear sighs of "no fish to purchase" in the distribution industry and "no fish to buy" in the consumer.*

*September 18 was a thought-provoking Sunday ahead of a state funeral for Britain's Queen Elizabeth. The Asahi Shimbun reported on the first and second pages that the self-management of the alfonsino fishery in Sotobo, Chiba Prefecture was a successful example. The MEL News has also positively discussed voluntary management as a feature of resource management in Japan, but I was frustrated that the combination of administrative management and voluntary management by fishermen has not been effectively utilized for deep-sea fish such as alfonsino, which moves over a wide area.*

*More than two years ago, I was featured in this article, recalling the story of the difficulties I heard from Suzuki Masao, president of the Chiba Prefecture Coastal Fishing Cooperative, who is himself a finfish fisherman.*

*The other is Nikkei's front page chart, "The Unicorn's 10 Years of Falling Back.". As you know, unicorns are defined as private companies with an enterprise value of over \$1 billion. The startup's business model, fueled by excessive expectations of unrealized technologies and concepts, is reportedly facing a turning point with monetary tightening. While the activities of startups are expanding in the marine products industry as well, I am thinking back on the wounds suffered by the industry during the 200 nautical mile bubble 40 years ago and the time it took to heal them, wondering if they can survive in this industry without sweating.*

*It was a serious topic, but I hope to have a fruitful autumn while preparing for natural disasters.*

*Marine Eco-Label Japan Council Secretariats*

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