



Oct 31st 2022

Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

MEL NEWS VOL. 55 (ENGLISH EDITION)

Dear MEL Partners:

It has become more and more like fall while the world is swayed by "unprecedented change." The triple punch of climate change, armed conflict, and a weak yen have raised "food security" from a lose-to-buy level to a more serious challenge.

Now, half a century after imports overtook exports in volume in 1976, Japan is entering an era in which expanding seafood exports is an inevitable trump card for regional revitalization. Expanding exports amid shrinking production volumes is a thorn in our side, but from a marketing perspective, the meticulous attention to detail unique to Japan is the underlying strength of the Japanese region that no one else in the world can duplicate.

We hope to make Japanese fish, which is sustainable and has the added value of being particular, shine with you.

1. Status of MEL Certification

The number of new certified entities this month will be three for CoC. No special remarks.

2. Events

① *ICFA in Rome on September 26*
Secretary General Kanno, President Shirasu of the and other members attended the annual meeting of the International Federation of Fishery Organizations on 26th, to exchange views between FAO and ICFA on the following day, 27th. It has been reported that the ICFA General Assembly took up the issue of preventing undue restrictions on

trawling fishing (proposed by Japan) and the issue of shark fishing (proposed by Panama), which were positioned as important meetings for Japan and heated discussions. In addition, President Shirasu of Japan Fisheries Association was elected as ICFA Vice Chairperson. I hope this will lead to MEL's presence at ICFA.

At the FAO-ICFA meeting, FAO explained the following policies: (1) strengthening

and expanding sustainable aquaculture, (2) improving fisheries management, and (3) innovating value chains. MEL raised the issue of reviewing the ban on feed feeding of "conspicifics" in aquaculture, and we received a certain response, so we will continue to persevere.

② Tokyo Bay Thanksgiving 2022

We exhibited in the Fisheries Agency booth at Tokyo Bay Thanksgiving 2022

held at Yokohama Port from October 15 to 16. This is MEL's third exhibition at this event, which is the 10th time it has been held online. Over and over again, we are trying to figure out how to appeal the marine eco-label to the diverse group of visitors (many of whom are families) at a major event that is said to have 100,000 people.



③ TSSS 2022

TSSS 2022, organized by Seafood Legacy and Nikkei BP, was held under the theme of 'Drawing a' Blue Ocean 'Strategy for Fisheries from October 19 to 21. MEL exhibited a booth on the 19th to report our activities, and on the 20th, I(Kakizoe) spoke with MSC Ishii, ASC Yamamoto, GSA Shibai, and Global GAP's Remko Oosterveld to participate in a panel

discussion titled "Initiatives by Certified Scheme Owners to Solve New Challenges" (the facilitator was Seafood Legacy President Hanaoka). This is my fourth appearance at TSSS as a MEL, and I feel that the programs and content that have been enhanced year by year, and the participants have the certainty of the current.



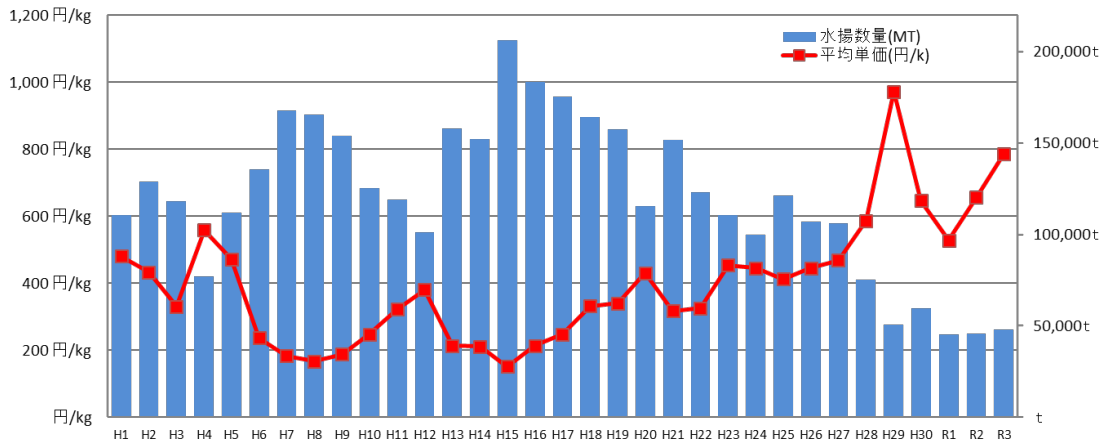
3.Voice from Certified Entities:

"The Environment Surrounding Aki-sake (Chum Salmon) and the Use of MEL Certification"

Katsuya Takeuchi,
Sales Department II,
Hokkaido Federation of Fisheries Cooperative Association

The first half of this season's Aki-sake catch was lower than last year's, but since September 22, the total amount of catch across the entire route has exceeded

2,000 tons daily, and as of October 10, the total amount of catch was 58,137 tons (152% of last year's catch), a recovery trend that had been low in recent years.



On the other hand, in terms of production, the decline in backside processing capacity has been marked by the decrease in processing capacity of local processors due to the shortage

of workers and the decrease in transportation. Some districts are struggling to cope with sudden increases in water levels, making it essential to take measures to stabilize

distribution.

Under these circumstances, this season, the association has modified the outer foam box design of fresh Aki-sake fillets to include the MEL mark for distribution in Japan.

Japanese retailers are also becoming more aware of eco-labels every year, and efforts to connect production areas to the end are gradually being realized. We hope that you will continue to promote efforts to acquire CoC certification for terminal operators.

Also, when the landing of Aki-sake is restored, domestic consumption will be increased for a stable distribution.

Not only that, but overseas consumption becomes important.

A major Western retailer (Walma at (USA), Metro (Germany), etc.,

requires the products which is marine eco-label certified that is approved by the GSSI.

As for the existing overseas companies to which we ship our products, they have been willing to handle Ecolabel certified products for some time, and it is expected that it will take time for the examination due to the restrictions imposed overseas due to the novel coronavirus, but we would like you to promote efforts for overseas companies to obtain MEL CoC certification.

As the first marine ecolabel certification from Japan approved by GSSI, we expect that MEL's global recognition will improve and that it will lead to the expansion of the market for MEL-certified products.



Styrofoam outer box of Aki-sake fillet from Hokkaido Federation of Fisheries Cooperative Association displaying MEL logo

4. Column

To the Japanese:

**Anthony Charles,
St. Mary's University, Halifax, Canada
Dean of the Department of the Environment**

I am pleased to be asked to write a few words about Marine Eco-Label Japan. Let me begin by thinking back to the early 1990s. That was when one of the world's biggest fishery collapses took place just off the coast from where I live, on the Atlantic coast of Canada. It was a dramatic and disastrous drop in the cod populations, which had previously supported the world's largest fishery. It was largely a result of over-fishing, and for me, it was a practical lesson in what can happen without sustainability practices. I was appointed by the government as one of a group to assess this disaster and provide guidance for the future. We could not magically make the cod reappear, but we did help put in place new management methods that perhaps helped to prevent further problems. This included a better focus on maintaining fishery ecosystems, the use of a precautionary approach, and better involvement of fishers in fishery management. At around the same time, and expanding greatly since then, around the world, is a complementary approach focusing on the end consumer of seafood, namely fishery certification – the practice of objectively and independently

assessing the sustainability of a fishery, and if it passes the test, then awarding an appropriate 'eco-label'.

It is good to see that Marine Eco-Label Japan is established as such a certification process, seeking to ensure the sustainability of Japan's fisheries – and its aquaculture operations. I have had the pleasure of touring fishery activities in Japan, and in doing so, exploring some fine seafood. Indeed, the strength of the seafood culture in Japan is such that the work of Marine Eco-Label Japan is very important for promoting sustainability.

It is clear that sustainability is a crucial pursuit in fisheries and throughout the modern world, as indicated in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). From the breadth of those goals, we see that sustainability involves a 'Triple Bottom Line' including economic, environmental and social sustainability. The first of these is simply referring to profitability. The second is dealing with all the environmental and resource management issues. The third, social sustainability, is about sustaining the social fabric of society – such as

ensuring decent work in fisheries, fairness in access to fisheries, and the welfare of coastal communities. While eco-labels may focus more on the environmental aspects, they can also consider social sustainability. To this end, it is good to see that for aquaculture, Marine Eco-Label Japan includes 'Social Responsibility' in its criteria, which relates to social sustainability and indeed could be applied as well to capture fisheries.

Around the world, coastal (small-scale) fisheries must be at the core of all fishery discussions. About 90% of all fishers are in coastal fisheries, which also support the economies and social fabric of coastal communities. Importantly, coastal fisheries are a key part of culture, certainly in Japan, as well as in many parts of the world. Further, coastal fishers are at the heart of environmental conservation and stewardship, of fishery resources and

fishery ecosystems, a crucial reality documented in recent work of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. For all these reasons, it is essential for coastal fisheries to flourish. One way to do that is for these fisheries to play a prominent role in certification and eco-labels, because that will help them to improve their social, economic and market profile. I cannot speak to the specifics of Japan, but it has been found in most places of the world that to support coastal fisheries in becoming certified, eco-labels must make special efforts to provide low-cost and straightforward ways for the coastal fisheries to participate. I am certain that Marine Eco-Label Japan will make all the efforts needed to support Japan's impressive coastal fisheries.

I wish Marine Eco-Label Japan all the best, and hope that these thoughts might be useful.

Dr. Anthony Charles Brief History



Dean of the School of the Environment at St. Mary's University in Halifax, Canada. He is an expert in environmental systems and aquatic resource management and a world authority on sustainable fishing systems, especially by fishing villages and small-scale fishermen.

< Public office >

former president of the International Association for Fisheries Economics and Trade (IIFET)

Presents CCRN (Community Conservation Network)

IUCN fisheries experts

Pew Foundation Marine Conservation Fellow

5.MEL Auditor Training Program

October 24 - 26 We conducted a new MEL jury training program. Partly because of the familiarity of society as a whole with the pandemic, the number of participants was 22, and I felt the momentum after a long time.

In particular, it was an unprecedented training session in which 16 participants took all the courses in fisheries,

aquaculture and CoC. At present, there are 112 qualified MEL auditors, but only a little over 40 of them are active, which is not enough given the increase in the number of certifications in the future. Another new trend is an increase in the number of people affiliated with operating companies taking classes.

EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT

Thank you, Takeuchi san. I also appreciate you are in charge MEL-related work for Hokkaido Federation of Fisheries Cooperative Association

Welcome to over 20 million fish landed for the first time in 4 years. They are also distributed in large quantities in consumption areas, energizing retail stores.

Over its long history, Aki-sake is one of Japan's leading fisheries, continued to today through the efforts of various stakeholders. I hope you protect it with the pride of Japan's fishing industry, which is said to be in decline.

This month's column is about "How MEL's activities are viewed by overseas people." I consulted with Dr. Mitsutaku Makino of the University of Tokyo, a member of the MEL Advisory Board, then I asked Dr. Anthony Charles of St. Mary's University in Canada, a mentor of Dr. Makino. Dr. Charles is a world authority on resource management and a Japanophile who deeply studies coastal small-scale fisheries and community economics. Thank you, Dr. Makino and Dr. Charles. As we come into contact with the assessment of the Japanese fishing community by international NGOs and others, we are humbled by the lack of communication of Japan's efforts, and we are thrilled that you are seeing Japan so fairly.

I look forward to working with you in the future.

Whole sale co-operative of Tokyo Fish Market held a ceremony and celebration on

October 4 to commemorate the 70 years anniversary of its founding. I would like to pay tribute to their contribution to seafood distribution since the time of Nihombashi, and offer my sincere congratulations on the 70 years anniversary. It was a great gathering with Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Nomura, Governor Koike and many other Diet members, city councilors, market administrators and business operators as guests. MEL was also invited by the people of Toyosu Market for promoting the acquisition of the marine ecolabel certification.

Even though the catch of the mainstay fish was sluggish, I was impressed by the expectations of the market from the government and administration, and the positive attitude of the operators. As I mentioned at the beginning, expanding exports in a country with a small catch is a thorn in our side, but I hope that Toyosu will transmit to the world the "fine details" unique to Japan and the "connoisseur skills" inherited from Tsukiji. I will do my best to make MEL certification useful to all of you at Whole sale co-operative of Tokyo Fish Market.

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