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Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

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Dear MEL Partners:

This year is finally coming to an end, with a variety of challenges that I can't afford to do. Although it was by no means a good year for the fishing industry, it was a year in which various developments became apparent in preparation for a new era.

New things always involve the agony of execution, but I think only after overcoming that agony will make the reform leading to tomorrow. An example of this would be 'long-term resource management', which has been the subject of much discussion lately. The new year will be marked by increasingly intense debate over the compatibility of resources and industry under global warming, which is being characterized as a disaster caused by human activities.

The long-overdue conservation and management measures for skipjack and tuna were agreed upon at the 19th annual meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) held in Penang, Vietnam from November 28 to December 3. I also see the discussion calling for both long-term resource management and the protection of the economic foundations of island nations as an important step. We hope this agreement will avoid confusion and create a calm business environment.

1. Status of MEL Certification

The number of new certified entities this month will be two for fisheries and one for CoC.

As a result, the year ended with 206 certifications: 22 for fisheries, 59 for aquaculture, and 125 for CoC certification at the end of 2022. We would like to express our gratitude to the certification bodies, auditors, peer reviewers and the consulting companies for their efforts.

A special mention for this month is that

fishing certification for 3 species of fish, mackerel, horse mackerel and yellowtail, took effect 1 year and 9 months after the Japan Purse Seiner's Association's Large and middle purse seine fishery received its application in March 2021.

Japan Purse Seiner's Association is an industry cooperative consisting of 28 fleets of 18 companies from 8 prefectures (Nagasaki, Saga, Fukuoka, Ehime, Oita, Tottori, Shimane, and Miyazaki) operating from the sea off

Yamaguchi Prefecture in the western part of the Sea of Japan to the East China Sea. We understand that the reason why the review took so long was because of the target operators, the large number of convoys and the unprecedented complexity of the MEL certification review, and the fact that the

resource level of sesame mackerel, which was originally a candidate, fell below the B-Limit, which required time to confirm the national report. This is an important fishery for Japan, and we hope you will utilize MEL certification.

2. MEL Board meeting.

On November 29, the 29th MEL Council Board of Directors was held by face-to-face and online. Eight directors and one auditor attended the meeting, and Shikasho assistant manager of the Processing and Distribution Division from the Fisheries Agency.

Following the business report and financial results for the first half of fiscal 2022, we received approval for the planned office relocation in January of next year. As matters to be reported, we have explained revision of the auditor

guide for fisheries certification and establishment and revision of standards and regulations.

Director Kikuchi asked about the registration status of the MEL logo overseas for the export of autumn salmon and the application of MEL certification for overseas processing, and reported the situation. As for overseas registration of MEL logos, there are countries that are struggling, such as China, and we are studying countermeasures with a patent attorney's office.

3.Voice from Certified Entities:

"With MEL-Certified 'Jigozen Oysters'"

**Yuji Yamashita,
Representative Director, Yamashita Suisan Co., Ltd.**

Our company was the first processor in Japan to receive Marine Eco-label Japan (MEL) Chain of Custody (CoC) certification in November 2021.

As for MEL products, we have started to introduce frozen fried oysters, frozen oysters and raw oysters as MEL

products, using oysters from the highly acclaimed MEL-certified Jigozen Fishery Cooperative (Hatsukaichi City, Hiroshima Prefecture).



カキ筏を背景に山下社長

President Yamashita with an oyster raft in the background

The introduction of MEL products to the market and the start of sales in our company was reported on the front page of the Minato Newspaper on August 8, 2022, in the TOP article. Many existing and new customers who saw the article inquired about it, and business negotiations and several product negotiations were concluded, and the sales of MEL products are gradually expanding.

The initiative to obtain MEL certification started because our company directly sources raw oyster materials from the Jigozen Fishery Cooperative (producer), which has obtained MEL certification, and because of the recent trend of mass retailers actively adopting products that meet the Sustainable Goals (SDGs), we thought we could offer products that meet customer needs and that could only be offered in our

company.

In addition, our company has its own freezing facilities (nitrogen freezing), and nitrogen freezing of oyster is the original freezing method in Japan that is only used by our company. We finally made our products that are environmentally friendly, not only in terms of products, but also in the manufacturing process (nitrogen freezing), containers and packaging, then goes all the way to market now. The nitrogen freezing process uses liquefied nitrogen as a refrigerant, which reduces greenhouse gas emissions during the freezing process, and the packaging and trays are partially made from plant-derived degradable plastic (PLA). We give consideration to the manufacturing process, containers and packaging materials.

With the introduction of MEL products

to the market, we aim to realize a decarbonized society by providing safe, secure and good oyster products as sustainable eco-friendly products. Our frozen Hiroshima nitrogen oysters

are certified by “The Hiroshima Brand” of Hiroshima city and “Higashi Hiroshima Meister” of Higashi Hiroshima city.

4.Column

Future of MEL (Marine Ecolabel in general)

**Kazuhiko Utsumi,
Executive Director of Japan Fisheries Association**

There are three things that come to mind in relation to MEL (Marine Ecolabel in general).

(1) I joined the Fisheries Agency in



大日本水産会 内海専務

Executive Director Utsumi of Japan Fisheries Association

1981, about 40 years ago. At that time, I was assigned to a department called the Development Division, which was responsible for cultivating fisheries and

developing coastal fishing grounds, and I was looking for examples all over the country to highlight the importance of resource management along with

fishing ground development.

It was about the time when the keyword 'resource management fishery' was coined and the case for it was born on the beach. 40 years on, the times have progressed, and now the government has scientifically assessed most industrially useful aquatic resources (192 in 2021) and declared that 80% of the catch will be under TAC control by 2023. In addition, it is said that up to about 90% of the fish catch is already included in the framework of resource management by the "Resource Management Guidelines and Planning System," which was implemented as a measure until now, if it includes voluntary management rather than public management such as TAC ("Basic Plan for Fisheries"). In the last 40 years, we can say that the fishing industry has changed drastically, from a world in which we seek out "fisheries with resource management" to a world in which it is difficult to find fisheries without resource management.

(2) In March 2019, the mackerel fisheries from countries such as Norway, Denmark and Ireland that had obtained MSC certification for their Northeast Atlantic mackerel fishery lost that certification, saying their overall catch performance far exceeded the ICES recommendation. After that, each country negotiated to set fishing quotas in accordance with each year's

recommendations, but no agreement was reached, and to this day, the fishing industry continues to operate with its own fishing quotas. Finally, the Norwegian government announced the other day (December 7) that the European Union, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the Faroe Islands have agreed and signed an agreement to operate under the total amount indicated by ICES for next year's catch, but the discussion on country allocation, which actually regulates each country's catch, is yet to come. During this time, the Norwegian government has taken great care of the mackerel exporters, and last year the Deputy Minister of Fisheries, the chief negotiator, went out of his way to I even held a press conference on the web, but I am afraid that this was done in order to respond even a little to the suspicions of those involved that "Is resource management OK?"

(3) The Norwegian government's current focus on enhancing exports of our country agricultural, forestry and fishery products is exemplified by the Norwegian Fisheries Council (NSC), which is working on this policy. As we are active in Japan, you may be familiar with this NSC website and see the Norwegian cod in Wildfish. The item labeled "Why Norwegian cod is sustainable with or without MSC" jumps out to me. It states the reason why Norwegian cod recently lost its MSC certification (the bycatch of

migratory and coastal cod seems to be the reason) and that Norwegian cod is still being fished as a sustainable source, ending with "MSC undoubtedly provides an important platform for buyers and consumers to turn to when they want to understand sustainable seafood options. However, it is important to recognize that the MSC is only one of many organizations that provide such recognition, and that national and organizational qualifications are still valid.". I was personally very surprised by how challenging the description was. Now, what do you want to say from these three stories, but First of all, what can be said from (2) and (3) is that "Already the ecolabel world can move the country." In (2), it is no wonder that the EU and European countries do not care that the Atlantic mackerel fishery, which was hitherto touted as an honor student in resource management, has lost its MSC certification and lost its reputation. They are eager to regain lost ground, and we can be sure that this has resulted in the recent agreement. (3) Then, the NSC goes out of its way to put such an item on its homepage only because they think quite seriously that it is impossible to ignore the impact of ecolabeling, and I don't have comment on whether the NSC is right or the MSC is right, but in any case, there is no doubt that the impact of ecolabeling has rocked that Norwegian parastatal.

Next is about (1).

In the past, ecolabels meant catches with resource management practices, and the emphasis was on the benefits of differentiation from others (it is true that this was said to be a "lucrative" fodder), but in our country, it is now difficult to find fisheries that do not have resource management practices. In other words, everyone has access to eco-labels. Then, as to the end of MEL's role, no, this is the beginning. If the ecolabel can demonstrate that our country fisheries have good resource management, it is possible to go global with this. in particular As it can be seen in (2) , the Pacific which is particularly East Asia lags far behind in international resource management compared with the Northeast Atlantic. The Japanese government has also demonstrated in (2) and (3) that Ecolabel can be a "common power tool for all countries" against the background of popular will, in an international power balance that is difficult to overcome in negotiations based on national power. I believe that the power of ecolabels will be a major force in promoting stagnant international resource management. If ecolabel certification systems are widespread around the world and scheme owners can cooperate to use them correctly, there is a possibility that we will achieve "global citizenship management of fishery resources" that goes beyond the national framework. I

think we are slowly starting to see the potential of ecolabeling as a powerful tool to achieve resource management that transcends even parochial national interests trapped in a national framework and is needed by all of humanity in this resource-limited

5.Events

On November 27, Fish -1 Grand-prix was held face-to-face in Hibiya Park for the first time in 3 years.

Though the space of introduction about MEL was modest due to the allocation of booths, it was a certain presence. The event was heated up with a lot of visitors under the clear weather.

The MEL Council is also exhibiting at the ethical corner of "WEB Exchange Festa 2022" hosted by the Tokyo Consumer Month Executive Committee of Shufuren, which will be held until January 20 next year. MEL is introduced as useful information for your life.

On Instagram this month, a MEL

planet.

I don't know if I can or can't get there, but I do believe that the future of MEL is there and I'm very hopeful that the people involved will continue to struggle to get there.

ambassador (1 person) introduced "BURI-OH" of Azuma-cho Fisheries Cooperative Association. Reel video has been viewed over 10,000 times, with 2200 responses in two feed posts.

(<https://www.instagram.com/reel/CmSYJkAbrJ/>)

We will further expand our PR of certified products, so please contact the MEL Secretariat if you have any requests.

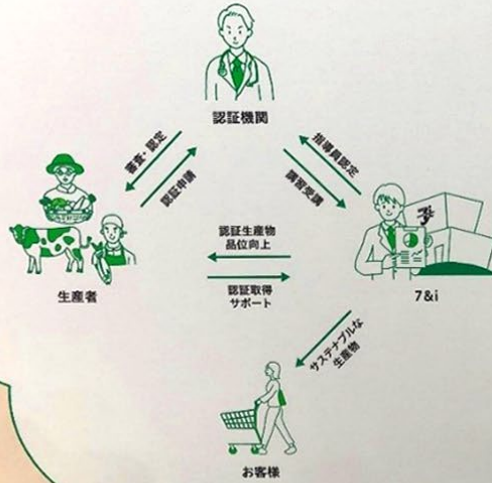
7 & i Group exhibited at SDGs Week EXPO 2022 (EcoPro 2022) on December 7-9 and took up MEL initiatives. The presentation to the visitors was very lively and gave a sense of the times.

Presentation of 7 & i Group

7&iグループ様のプレゼン

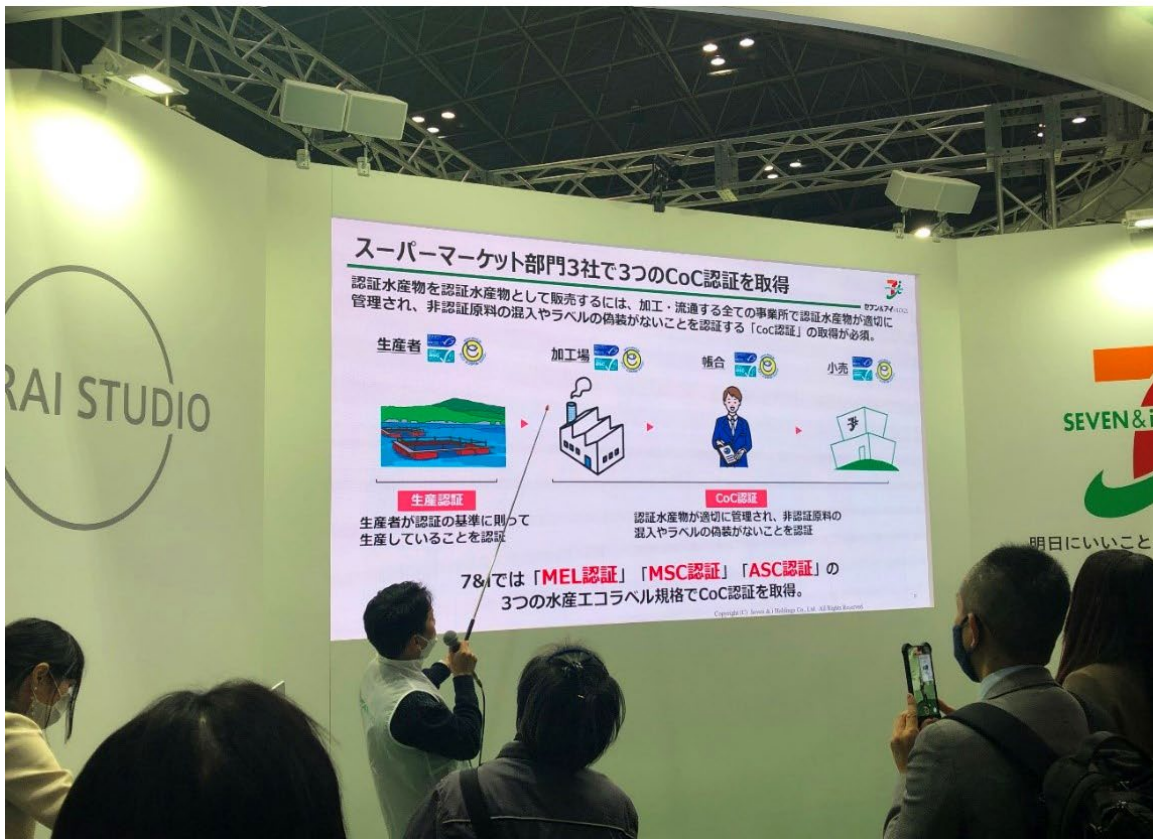
私たちの取り組み

セブン&アイでは持続可能な生産に取り組む生産者が認証を取得できるようなサポートもしています。生態系だけでなく、生産者の生活も持続可能なものになるよう貢献してまいります。



取得に取り組んでいる認証

取得した認証マークはパッケージにも掲載されています。



EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT

This month we received a report from Yamashita Suisan Co., Ltd. president Yuji Yamashita on oysters in Hiroshima, which are in season, and on the beach in their second year of MEL certification. Thank you, Yamashita san.

Thank you, Utsumi san. You gave us solid guidance on the future of "MEL from Japan to the world". I look forward to working with you as the birth parent of MEL as well as the parent brought us up.

On December 9, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) released its Red List, and three of Japanese abalone species -- the mataka, the megai, and the Kuro -- were listed as endangered (EN: highly endangered in the wild in the near future). Since then, the Act on the Regulation of Seafood Distribution has come into force in Japan, and abalone, sea cucumbers and glass eels have been designated as specified class one. The move to eradicate IUU fishing is getting stricter, and the world's move to conserve biodiversity is going forward with no choice.

While there is a lot of heavy news in the fishing industry, Hokkaido Autumn Salmon, the first MEL fishery certified salmon, has been doing well for the first time in a while. I hope everyone will have a good year by encouraged from this good news about autumn salmon.

Thank you for staying with MEL News this year.

Marine Eco-Label Japan Council Secretariats

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