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Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

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Dear MEL Partners:

Happy New Year everyone! The weather was clearly divided between the Pacific and Sea of Japan sides during the New Year's holiday, but I wish you all the best and best wishes for the coming of spring.

The tumultuous 2022 Year of the Tiger is over, and the chaotic 2023 Year of the Rabbit is in motion. We know the difficult environment will continue, but we hope to move forward with you. Thank you for your continued support in the year.

1. Status of MEL Certification

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

Although the number of certifications issued has remained low in recent years, the number of projects under consultation and review has been piling up, and we expect the number to turn upward from around spring.

On January 6, a new year celebration was held in the city of Aomori for those involved in the production and sales of scallops in the prefecture, MEL certificate ceremony was held as a special event. The ceremony was the first on-site certification ceremony for MEL certification, in which participants from

the Aomori Fisheries Federation, which has obtained MEL aquaculture certification, and the 10 fisheries cooperatives participated in the entire supply chain. I would like to express my gratitude to Seishiro Matsushita, the president of the Aomori Gyoren, and all those involved for their efforts in organizing this event.

I hope you will make a big appeal both domestically and internationally for scallop aquaculture which coexists with the natural environment of Aomori as well as a model project of "LIFE BELOW WATER" in the 14th goal of the SDGs.



陸奥湾ほたて MEL 養殖認証証書授与式。中央左側が青森県漁連 松下誠四郎会長

MEL certificate ceremony of Mutsu Bay scallop aquaculture. At center left is Seishiro Matsushita, chairperson of Aomori Fisheries Federation.

2.Voice from Certified Entities:

"Tomakomai surf clam to Increase awareness of MEL certification"

***Tomakomai Federation of Fisheries Cooperative Association
President: Nobutaka Ito***

Tomakomai Federation of Fisheries Cooperative Association is located in the city of Tomakomai on the Pacific coast of Hokkaido, blessed with abundant resources in the Pacific Ocean and catches more than 100 fish species annually. The main fishery is the gill-net fishery, the chum salmon set-net fishery and the surf clam

dredge net fishery. The surf clam fishery, in particular, is a core fishery in which about 80% of the members are engaged. We as a single fishing cooperative obtained MEL CoC certification in 2018, and Ver. 2 fisheries certification and CoC certification in 2022. The surf clam fishery had been in

operation since the Meiji period, but the depletion of the fishery resources after the war led to calls for a drastic solution in the 20s of the Showa period, and since around 30, efforts have been made to stabilize the fishery resources, including the establishment of prohibited areas and fishing seasons, the protection of young clams smaller than 9 cm (In Hokkaido, fish larger than 7.5 cm are allowed to be

caught, but we only catches fish larger than 9 cm on its own.), and the transfer of seeds and seedlings, as well as the switch to the jet fishing method and a comprehensive survey of surf clams. Through the resource management efforts inherited from our predecessors, we have maintained the highest landing volume in Japan for 22 consecutive years.



苦小牧漁協 伊藤 信孝組合長 ホッキ貝ポスターと共に

President Ito with surf clam poster

In addition to strict resource management, we have been active in promoting branding as well, as evidenced to be certified as "City Shellfish of Tomakomai" in 2002, obtained regional group trademark registration for "surf clam of Tomakomai" in 2007, and certified as "Pride Fish" in 2016.

On the other hand, the surf clams in Tomakomai have long been subject to strict resource management by the

fishermen themselves, but their resource management efforts have never been evaluated as "value" or a brand in promoting sales of surf clams. Apart from the quality of the surf clams, the fact that MEL was thought to be a valuable tool for realizing resource management as a new 'value' was a major factor behind the acquisition of MEL certification, and expanding recognition of MEL is an important mission to create even more

'value'.

In an effort to further raise awareness of MEL, we have produced a new boiled-surf clam (frozen) product for general consumers with the cooperation of a local processing company. As removing the surf clams from their shells was a challenge, we devised a way to make them available to more consumers, and the high quality we were able to maintain was highly appreciated by local residents.

In addition, we hope that by stamping the MEL certification mark on the package, we can contribute to the spread of awareness in a small way. This product is expected to be a domestic product as well as an overseas export product in the future, and we would like to communicate the value of MEL to as many people as possible to consume the surf clams of Tomakomai, which will lead to further recognition of MEL.

Thank you very much, Ito san. We are pleased to receive MEL certification as part of embodying the spirit of protecting the resources we inherited from our predecessors. I pray that this combination of voluntary and public management, which is the hallmark of resource management in Japan, will continue to be developed in the future. I hope MEL can help with marketing and other things, and the Tomakomai surf clams have been sent out by MEL ambassador Instagrammer.



4.Column

"For Processors to Make More Use of MEL Certification"

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FISHERY PROCESSOR'S CO-OPERATIVE ASSOCIATIONS

Yoshiaki Nakayama, President

The National Federation of Fishery Processor's Co-operative Associations is a national organization of cooperatives whose members are business establishments that manufacture processed marine products such as salted and dried products, salted products, frozen foods and paste products. The seafood processing industry has

become a major pillar of the local economy in fishing areas, and it also plays an important role in processing the catch into food forms that are easy to cook, easy to eat, and have preservative properties to provide a stable supply to consumers. About 70% of the seafood destined for domestic consumption (edible) is distributed as processed marine products.



全水加工連 中山嘉昭会長

President Nakayama

Our country's fishing industry has developed on the back of some of the world's best fishing grounds, but in recent years, with the changing climate and environment, food

Catches of major fish species familiar to the table have declined or stagnated, and conditions remain difficult. On the other hand, from a global perspective, demand for

seafood products is rising on the back of health consciousness. In our country, where the yen continues to depreciate and deflationary trends continue, the procurement environment for marine raw materials from domestic and overseas sources is extremely difficult. In order to change this situation, it is important that fish products are first landed in a stable manner at various fishing ports. The government is working to recover the catch by drastically revising the Fisheries Act and further strengthening the resource management system. Producers are also taking voluntary measures to manage resources and conserve the environment in their communities. For the recovery and stability of fishery resources, processors and distributors also need to respect and cooperate in the implementation of these resource management initiatives as well as global environmental issues in order to effectively utilize their limited resources.

MEL (Marine Eco-label Japan Council) is a marine ecolabel that certifies producers who actively practice sustainable use of resources and environmental conservation-friendly management, as well as businesses that process and distribute marine products from such producers. We have been told that MEL certified marine products include 81 tuna, bonito, yellowtail and whitebait products produced by fishing

organizations and fish farmers in each region, or 5.5% of our country's total production, and we expect more marine products to be certified in the future. Consumers are also shifting toward ethical consumption, which is a consumer-friendly activity that takes people and the environment into consideration, and I am aware that the retail industry is actively setting up product sections on ethical consumption in response to this shift. Small- and medium-sized seafood processors have yet to fully utilize these certifications, but they are considering using them in response to requests from mass merchandisers and marketing strategies in Europe, the United States and other countries, and we expect their use to increase as the number of products certified increases. In order to make effective use of precious marine resources, fish processors must cooperate with producers and distributors, utilize marine products with good resource conditions, and make every effort to ensure that such products are matched to the needs of consumers and are not discarded. To this end, it is essential to actively utilize MEL's initiatives, which are increasingly socially responsible, and we are confident that MEL will play a major role in the stable future of the seafood processing industry. We, too, would like to cooperate in the use of MEL by businesses under our membership.

Thank you, Nakayama san. In the seafood supply chain, the need for processed products has never been greater since the corona pandemic and is expected to continue to increase. We hope that processing companies will join the circle of using MEL certification and that together we can support the ethical consumption of consumers.

5. Promotional Related Topic

We asked Nobutaka Ito, president of the Tomakomai Federation of Fisheries Cooperative Association, to report to us from the certified entities in this month's issue, and Abeshima san, the

general manager of the cooperative, contacted us about the sales promotion.



Tomakomai's nice and thick hokki(surf clam) is parboiled and quick-frozen for sashimi, and has been available since fall 2022 with the double logo of MEL and Pride fish. Tomakomai Federation of Fisheries Cooperative Association, which has obtained certification for fishery and CoC, is linked to Maruzen Shokuhin Co., Ltd., which has also obtained certification for CoC. Sales have started for the Toyosu, Osaka,

and Nagoya markets, and the product has been well-received as a long-awaited MEL marked product. I have heard that the online shop of the Hokkaido Federation of Fisheries Cooperative Association is also preparing to sell them along with other certified seafood products such as chum salmon (Akisake), so we can expect more developments in the future.

6. The MEL Council office has moved

As we have already informed you in writing, we have moved the MEL Council offices to the 3rd floor of the Nittochi Uchisaiwaicho Building in Hibiya from January 24 in conjunction with the rebuilding of the Sankaido Building. The nearest station is Uchisaiwaicho Station on the Mita Line of the Toei Subway, but

it's a good location as it's a 7-minute walk from the west exit of JR Shimbashi Station. It will be a little too much work, but we will make full use of the functions of Japan Fisheries Association, with which we share the office, to ensure that there are no discrepancies.

EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT

I think the New Year's events that were often crowned "first time in three years" are coming to close.

In the speech of a certain congratulatory exchange, there was talk of "Corona crisis" to "Corona fruit." He said, "The corona pandemic was a great disaster, but at the same time, there were good things = fruits that were realized because of the coronavirus." Above all, IT has advanced. All of us felt the widespread adoption of a new business culture, including remote meetings, business negotiations, and working from home are considered as a fruit.

Editors refer to the current situation as the "new era of seafood eco-labels.". From its original point of view of "protecting marine ecosystems and resources," the marine eco-label is now required to "fulfill our social responsibilities" in conjunction with the implementation of the SDGs. These include actions on climate change, human rights issues, reducing marine plastics, and ensuring transparency in the supply chain.

None of this is easy, but I want to work hard with you for our own business and the future

of our planet. The January edition of MEL's current status report has been titled "Seafood Ecolabel for a New Era." If you have a request, please let the Secretariats know.

Marine Eco-Label Japan Council Secretariats

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