



MEL NEWS

Wittrock

This month's
MEL certified
marine products



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Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

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Dear MEL Partners:

Spring on the calendar has come while the whole world covered in dark news. Media reports are saying that "Nori(laver), you too" that means the poor harvest of the important ingredients that support Japanese food culture. This month, we exchanged views with the members of the Advisory Board on the actions MEL should take in preparation for the "new era of seafood ecolabels" and received various suggestions. It will be reflected in the activities of the new fiscal year.

1. Status of MEL Certification

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

In Japan, the number of marine ecolabels issued has slowed down, not only for MEL

but also for the entire marine ecolabels.

Toward the new fiscal year, we will strengthen our approach to retail and restaurant businesses and focus on achieving balanced expansion.

(年度)	MEL				MSC		ASC	
	漁業	養殖	CoC	計	漁業	CoC	養殖	CoC
2018以前	2	2	4	8	6	216	6	110
2019	0	19	17	36	2 -2	56	4	26
2020	5	20	37	62	4	28	4	43
2021	8 -1	13	42	62	2	9	2 -2	-13
2022	8	10 -4	28 -2	40	2	38	0	19
累計	22	60	126	208	14	347	14	185

2.Voice from Certified Entities:

"My thoughts on the revival of herring along the Sea of Japan coast of Hokkaido"

Ishikari Bay Fishery Cooperative

Ikuo Wada, Executive Director

The origin of the herring fishery in Hokkaido is not well known, but it is believed that the Ainu caught herring

for their own use before the 13 centuries, including by fishing with tamo net.



思いを語られる 和田 郁夫専務

Executive manager Ikuo Wada speaks of his thought

At the beginning of the Edo period, when rice cultivation was not yet practiced in Hokkaido, the Matsumae clan began full-scale herring fishing by granting their vassals the right to trade with the Ainu and the right to use their territories for fishing, and in the middle of the Edo period, the management of their territories was entrusted to merchants, and the main player in the

trade became herring fishing. In the Meiji period, the place contract system regulated by the Matsumae clan was eliminated, and family gillnet fishing and fixed net fishing by the team of dozens or hundreds of people began. In the Taisho period, when the herring fishery by set net fishing became large-scale, many migrant "yansyu" came

from the areas of Aomori, Iwate, Akita and Yamagata, bringing a wide area of the Sea of Japan coast of Hokkaido to life and prosperity.

At that time, many of the herring caught were transported to various parts of the province, including Niigata and Yamagata prefectures, by carrier boats, and the herring products processed into dried herring, minced herring and dried herring roe were shipped mainly to the Kansai area by kitamae-bune.

After peaking at 970,000 tons in 1897, the herring catch declined until it was wiped out in 1959, literally becoming a "phantom fish." In the midst of this process, it is truly amazing to see the force of nature, which, despite being a period background of low technology in freezing, processing and distribution, built up a wide range of distribution and food culture at that time, and even sustained herring resources for an extraordinary long period from the Edo period to the mid-Showa period.

The Ishikari Bay herring that recently acquired MEL certification mainly spawns in Ishikari Bay along the northern coast of the Sea of Japan, and is a different species from the Hokkaido/Sakhalin herring that was

caught in the past.

Many years of accumulation were behind the recovery in fish catches. First, from 1996 to 2008, the Sea of Japan Herring Augmentation Project, which was led by our union Corporation for the Promotion of Hokkaido Aquaculture Promotion Corporation and led by the Fisheries Experiment Station, carried out seedling production, intermediate rearing, and juvenile release, and since 2008, the Northern Sea of Japan Herring Cultivation and Fisheries Promotion Committee, which is headed by our union and consists of 15 fishing cooperatives, 18 municipalities, and 17 related organizations as observers, has taken over the project, releasing 2 million juvenile fish per year, and conducting monitoring such as juvenile and juvenile distribution surveys and biometric surveys by the Fisheries Experiment Station. The certified gill net fishery in the Sea of Japan has strict resource management practices, such as setting the net size at 2 cm or larger to secure subsequent resources, protecting young and small fish, and setting the fishing season at 75 days from mid-January to early April.



ニシンの網外し作業の様相

Catches of herring from Hokkaido have been increasing in recent years, while processed products from foreign countries dominate the market. With this certification, we hope to expand the spread of fish-eating to all parts of the country so that people can taste the natural deliciousness of herring in sashimi and other dishes, and at the same time, we sincerely hope that viewing the MEL label will help foster awareness of the conservation of the

habitat environment for living organisms.

This year, our union is planning to provide free local herring to elementary and junior high schools in Ishikari City in the district with 5000 meals a day for school lunches multiple times, and we hope to make children aware of the importance of preserving the natural environment and promoting fish-eating for the future through MEL.

Thank you, Wada san. Your thoughts on environmental protection and resource recovery were clearly conveyed. This is exactly the direction that MEL, Japan's first eco-label for marine products, is aiming for, and the MEL Council will do our best to follow your wishes and serve you. In order to dig up consumption, we are preparing to have MEL ambassadors send out herring menus through SNS.

4.Column

To expand the activities of “The Association to Promote Kesenuma Fish in School Lunch” all over the country

**Representative: Sotaro Usui
(President, Uusufuku Honten)**

• *A catalyst for the establishment*

The establishment of “the Association to Promote Kesenuma Fish in School Lunch” was triggered by the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011. We experienced the great earthquake and felt the importance of energy, food and human connection again. That day we got away from the tsunami mindlessly and lived in the same clothes for several days. We could live with one outfit. Many people lost their homes, but the place they lived kept out the cold, and they could live in tents or gymnasiums if they warmed up. At the beginning of the disaster, one rice ball was distributed per person per day. Without food, we couldn't live. The most important thing in necessities of life is to eat. We experienced firsthand how important food is. Our role as survivors is to tell as many people as possible what we felt then. In addition to conveying the importance of energy, food, and

human connections, I felt that I had to convey to the people I was going to meet and to the children who would bear the future that this city where we live has a world-class food industry, as well as a fishing and fishing industry. In December of the year following the earthquake, our company Usufuku Honten led the establishment of this association by four organizations: the Kesenuma Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Kesenuma Fisheries Cooperative Association and the Japan Fisheries Association. In the 10 years or so since then, the number of organizations supporting our activities has gradually increased to 24 organizations, both public and private. The criteria for membership of the society is “stop at this finger”, and each organization brings what they are able to do, becomes an organization to conduct activities as volunteers.

• *Understanding problems*

When the Association was first established, most of the protein sources were imported, such as meat and seafood, and, unfortunately, local

ingredients were rarely used for local school lunches. When I checked the ingredients for one day, I found something called Sanriku offshore

saury. We had some doubts about the term offshore Sanriku, not Sanriku, and when we did our own research, we discovered that it was an imported Pacific saury from a certain country that was being overfished just outside our country EEZ, which is also hindering Japanese fishing. To some extent, I can understand that school meals are also a business for suppliers, but I very much wondered what it would be like to use such ingredients for school meals in Japan just because they are cheap to buy and make profit.

School lunch is something that school-age children all over Japan must eat one meal a day. Is it really good that this is not a domestic or local product, but a foreign product whose production history is unclear, without knowing who produced it or where? If we continue to feed these foods to our children, who will bear the future, we will not be able to foster a sense of appreciation for food and producers, and we will form a false sense of value that food is just as good as it is cheap. The Sanriku coastal region where we live is home to many seafood products that are the best landed in Japan, as well as many processed products that have won numerous awards in Japan and abroad. Through school lunches, I wanted children, who will be the leaders of the next generation, to learn

more about key industries, that this city has an industry to be proud of, and that fish is delicious and healthy.

Article 2 of the School Lunches Act (enacted in 1954) states that improving the understanding of the excellent traditional food culture of our country and each region, and leading to a correct understanding of the production, distribution and consumption of food, however, perhaps due to differences in interpretation, the reality has turned out to be quite different from what we think.

At present, the decision of ingredients for school lunches is made by bidding, so if the same ingredients are used, cheaper ones are selected, and domestic products with relatively high unit prices can not compete with cheaper foreign products in price competition. To be honest, it is difficult for us to produce all of our school meals domestically at the low cost of about 300 yen per meal (food only), but we would like to provide our children with delicious fish that is as domestically produced and locally produced as possible.

If we can provide children with a lot of fresh, delicious fish in season, they might like fish more than they do now, and I'm sure we can prevent them from eating less fish.

• *Content of Activities*

Our activities now focus on developing products for school lunches and holding food education classes. In order to make locally fried fish more delicious to eat, we also developed swordfish minced croquettes under the

supervision of the former executive chef of a famous hotel who is also a member of the association. We have received good reviews from children who say it is very delicious.



臼井社長による食育授業風景

Food education class by President Usui

In regard to food education classes, we listen to requests from the schools and hold 2 classes each time. In first class, local fishermen who usually work in the sea, such as saury boats, deep-sea tuna fishing boats, set nets and poking sticks, and seaweed and oyster farming, are invited to teach students

how to fish and how rewarding it is from their standpoint. Then at the second class, students use tablet and Web software created by the association to foster a sense of appreciation for food based on the three themes of the bounty of the sea, people involved in food, and healthy

bodies.

Currently, we offer classes not only in our hometown of Kesennuma, but also in schools as far away as Kyushu, Tokyo, and Kanagawa Prefecture upon request. Last year, we also held a cultural exchange program to connect elementary schools in the Republic of

• Future prospects

We hope that the children who take our classes will someday leave their hometowns, learn a lot in the outside world, and come back to Kesennuma to support the food of Kesennuma and engage in the fishing industry.

There is no doubt that the cost of food will rise more than it is now by making all school meals domestically produced. However, the domestication of school lunches should surely increase our country's food self-sufficiency, and I believe that we can pass on knowledge of proper food to children by eating school lunches while considering the background of the food.

In the coming years, it will become increasingly difficult to secure food due to environmental changes and

Indonesia and Kesennuma, which support the Japanese fishing industry on a daily basis, to each other's food and traditional culture through the Internet. It has spread through word of mouth and other means, and thanks to this, the number of classes we have received to date has exceeded 100.

resource problems. In order to protect Japanese food, we must pass on the correct values about food to our children and the nation as a whole. I think that is the important role of us remaining from that day.

Through school lunches, I hope that children across the country will learn that there is a world-class food industry in every region of Japan, and that this activity will spread throughout the country.

I would like to ask your association to encourage relevant ministries and professional vendors to use MEL-certified seafood for school meals nationwide. I am sure that it will be a source of pride for the certified fishers to let children all over the country know and eat MEL-certified fish.

▼Click here for the website of "The Association to Promote Fish from Kesennuma in School Lunch"

<https://kesennumanosakana.jp/index.html>

Thank you, Usui san. I would like to express my heartfelt respect for President Usui, who has been promoting the implementation of the "food and food industry" in school lunches with the desire to share once again with everyone the importance of

the industry that he realized through his unspeakable and terrible experience of the disaster. The MEL Council will keep on trying to develop it into a big circle of aspiration.

5. MEL Advisory Board

A regular meeting of the MEL Advisory Board was held on February 14. The Chair, Hiroyuki Matsuda (Professor, Yokohama National University), Hiroshi Terashima (Advisor, Japan Ocean Policy Society), Yuriko Shiraishi (Representative, Women's Forum for Fish), Yuko Hirano (Vice President, Shufuren), Mitsutaku Makino (Professor, University of Tokyo) and Kazuhiko Utsumi (Executive Director, Japan Fisheries Association) attended the meeting. Details will be posted on the MEL home page.

They shared the view that we have entered a "new era" in which we are required to fulfill our social responsibilities from the conservation of marine ecosystems and the protection of resources, of which the marine eco-label is the starting point. The world's discussion on biodiversity is also becoming more mainstream in the direction of "symbiosis between people and nature" as seen in the Kunming and Montreal conferences, and MEL received various suggestions on how to respond. Among other things, he pointed out that in addition to contributing to regional development, which is the hallmark of MEL's activities, it is necessary to make MEL's differentiation more visible through the acceleration of overseas expansion,

and to go global with MEL models that originated in Japan (MEL's philosophy). In light of the fact that MEL-certified seafood production now stands at 480,000 tons (estimated in 2022), more than 10% of Japan's total production, it was also requested to prepare measures to protect the MEL brand and those certified.

The MEL Council requested them the addition of seeking input on what is happening in MEL's activities with regard to the enhancement of the advisory board's functions (expected to function as an outside director or auditor), approved. It was truly a sobering meeting. Going forward, we will strive to "evolve every day" while receiving the knowledge of the Advisory Board.

In addition, on February 7, just before the Advisory Board's regular meeting, President Ohno and other senior members of Kaiko Bussan in Funabashi visited the our office. I was sternly pointed out that if we don't try to run a scheme that pays more attention to MEL's reputation, it will "damage the social reputation of the certified entities." We took it seriously and reported it to the Advisory Board to help them more, which led to discussions about protecting the MEL brand.

6. Seafood Show Osaka

The 20th annual Seafood Show Osaka, sponsored by Japan Fisheries Association, was held for 2 days from February 21 to 22 at ATC Hall. For the first time in 3 years, the opening ceremony was held in face-to-face meeting, and the number of exhibition frames was 290, a significant increase from the previous year's 200 and a record high.

It recovered to close to 330, and became a lively exhibition with aggressive product sales everywhere.

Once again, a marine ecolabel corner was set up, and participants included MEL, ASC, and BAP scheme owners as well as four certified companies, as well as an elementary school student's field trip to the revived Fish Study Group.



シーフードショー大阪のMELブースで熱心に話を聞く小学生

Elementary school students listened intently at MEL booth in Seafood Show Osaka

EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT

It is said that spring comes in the order of light, sound and temperature. The days are getting longer before I realize it. We hope that we can finally take a break from the pandemic and that your activities will regain their former momentum. The MEL Secretariat is also settling down in the new office. We will try to take positive action to be more helpful to everyone, and we ask for your continued support.

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