



Apr 30th 2023

Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

## **MEL NEWS VOL. 61 (ENGLISH EDITION)**

Dear MEL Partners:

*New members of society stand out in the city. They are the age who were forced to live a hard life as students, directly affected by the coronavirus. I warmly welcome them so that they can take advantage of what they have learned during the tough times in Japan.*

*The commuter transportation system has been slightly crowded since a while ago. They say the reason is that they are forced to reduce the number of services due to a shortage of drivers. To think that the effects of the decline in the working population started in such a place before the Year 24 problem, I feel seriously suspended for the future.*

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

*The number of new certified entities this month will be three for CoC and another four will be soon certified.*

*As we reported in MEL News last month, there was an error in the description of the effective date of the approval of the first issue of The Marine Ecology Research Institute (MERI). To be precise, this should be*

*a report that the approval of the first of the two on-site audits required to obtain JAB accreditation as a certification body has come into effect, but it can be taken as indicating that JAB accreditation of MERI has been completed in the article. We apologize for any inconvenience caused to those involved.*

### **2. MEL Board Meeting**

*The 30th Board Meeting was held on March 31.*

*The main agenda of this meeting was the discussion and approval of the business report, projected income and expenditure for 2022, the business plan and income and expenditure budget for 2023. In*

*terms of projected revenues and expenditures, we expect to report a loss in fiscal 2022 due to the burden of office relocation expenses. Although these are temporary expenses, to become financially independent, it is essential to increase both membership fees and*

business revenues, which are the two pillars of revenue. We will continue to make steady efforts to gain your understanding toward our goal of 100 members and 500 certifications. As a matter of reporting, I have explained the implementation of the "New Management Rules for MEL Certification Numbers." In this case, due to the multiplicity of examination bodies, the "rules for numbering certification numbers" were newly established because Japan Fisheries Resource

#### **4. We held a management review meeting**

A tripartite management review meeting was held on April 21 between the SO (scheme owner = MEL Council), AB (accreditation body = JAB) and CB (certification body = JFRCA, MERI). Management reviews are required by GSSI standards (benchmark tools) to be conducted by scheme owners, and in line

Conservation Association (JFRCA) form that has been used up to now is not convenient.

Application will begin on July 1. The deadline for the transition to the new system is three years, so we ask that you move to the new system at a time that is convenient for you, such as packaging materials.

We also contacted the certifiers directly along with the listing on the MEL website.

with this requirement, MEL regularly reports and cross-checks on its business performance and the activities of its certification and accreditation bodies. We believe that the meeting this year was also useful for reporting and discussing with AB and CB to increase transparency in detail.

#### **4. Voice from Certified Entities**

**" About MEL Certification and the Future of Pair-trawlers Fishery"**

**Fumiki Nishimura**

**Former president of Kii Channel Central Motor Vessel Pair-trawlers Cooperatives**

Kii Channel Central Motor Vessel Pair-trawlers Cooperatives is a group of Seto Inland Sea craft fisherman affiliated with the Arita Minoshima Fishery Cooperative in Arita City, Wakayama Prefecture, who operate year-round to catch Shirasu in the Kii Channel, north of Hinomisaki.

The fishing hours are fixed from sunrise to sunset, but since 2018 we have been working on resource management with our own arrangements with boat trawler fishermen in other areas, with only the morning hours of operation.



漁獲物の水揚げ風景（キッチンと施氷され鮮度管理されていることが伺える）

*Landscape of the catch shows properly iced and freshness controlled.*

*Although some fleets saw their catch decline as a result of this initiative, the overall results showed that the extreme drop in fish prices during the prime fishing season was eliminated, and that the average catch continued, resulting in an increase in unit prices. In addition, it reduced the physical fatigue of the crew, well received in many ways. In the midst of all this, I heard about this MEL from a Shirasu processing company which is our business partner, and they suggested we get the certification. At first, I was half in doubt, saying "Is there any merit in getting certified?" and "Can we really get certified?" However, after hearing a lot of stories and thinking it would be good for our industry, we*

*decided to aim for certification. I think it was great that we were able to get the cooperation of the fishermen's cooperative and the prefecture in obtaining the certification. In fiscal 2020, when the certification was obtained, the fishing volume reached a record high, probably due to the effect of the reduced operating hours. The next year, in 2021, the catch was about the same as in previous years, but throughout the year the beach values were better than in previous years, and it seemed that the MEL certification had some effect. It has been a long time since people have been talking about the aging of the fishing industry and the lack of successors, but in the future, it is*

*important for the trawler industry to maintain the type of operation, catch volume, and fish price that can be passed on to the next generation with confidence, and we strongly want to continue our current efforts.*

*We also hope that the MEL certification system will become more widely recognized and become a product that is sought after by many people, so we appreciate your cooperation.*

*Thank you, Mr. Nishimura and Mr. Shimamura. I remember as if it were yesterday that I visited Minoshima on November 28, 2018, I gave an explanation about MEL certification in the fisheries cooperative conference room. Not surprisingly, the attendees were all fishermen, and they had some tough questions about what benefits MEL certification would bring.*

*And now, we are pleased that Shirasu you caught has become a mainstay product of COOP Sustainable by the Japan Confederation.*

*I pray that the Shirasu fishery in the Kii Channel will continue and develop further through your efforts.*

## **5.Column**

### **International Marine Eco Label "MEL JAPAN" Birthday Eve**

**Yoshiyuki Shige**

**Former Executive Director of Japan Fisheries Association**

*MEL has grown into an ecolabel that is globally accepted and recognized as a system for evaluating the resource management efforts of Japanese fisheries to international standards. The title is a little exaggerated, but I would like to briefly talk about how the predecessor organization, Japan Fisheries Association, got to the present organization from the time when it was working on eco-label certification as JFAMEL.*



元大日本水産会専務理事 重義行様

*Some ecolabels in fisheries were initially used for negative campaigns against the industry, such as Dolphin Free by environmental groups, and these exclusive ecolabels became an import barrier for fishing countries, developing African countries, and other countries that export seafood to Western markets, so they were taken up by the FAO, which set forth its own ecolabel guidelines. Ecolabels based on the history and methods of the protection of fishery resources have also been established in fishing countries such as Iceland and Alaska, and finally Ecolabels have started to act as one of the effective methods to foster the original sustainable fishery industry. JFAMEL also started up during this period as a mechanism to fairly evaluate and promote resource management activities carried out voluntarily by fishermen. However, after the proliferation of eco-labels and the FAO guidelines became insufficient as guidelines, an NPO called the Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative (GSSI), with the support of the FAO, decided to formulate marine eco-label standards based on an internationally fair and strict mechanism.*

*Based on the FAO guidelines at the time, JFAMEL was a two-stage eco-label in which fisheries were certified by Japan Fisheries Resource Conservation Association which is certified by JFA, the scheme owner.*

*There were many hurdles in reaching the GSSI standards, including the fact that it did not have a strict three-way structure of accreditation bodies, certification bodies, and scheme owners, which is one of the requirements of the new eco-label system established by the GSSI, and that the accreditation body to certify a certification body must be a member of an international accreditation body association.*

*This led to the possibility of obtaining the cooperation of the Japan Accreditation Board (JAB), a member of the International Association of Accreditation Bodies, as an accreditation body for the accreditation of accreditation bodies, which was the most difficult issue, by making efforts to collect information, such as receiving guidance from Professor Yagi, who is an expert on fisheries and environmental issues at the University of Tokyo, with reference to the preceding ecolabel of forestry, thus enabling an independent tripartite system of JAB, the Association for the Protection of Marine Resources, which is the accreditation body, and Japan Fisheries Association, which is the scheme owner. As a result, preparations to apply for approval by the GSSI had just been made, but the problem is that Japan Fisheries Association, a fishermen's association, was a scheme owner. The Marine*

*Ecolabel Japan Council became an independent general incorporated association to comply with the GSSI requirements, creating the issue of selecting the president of the newly formed Marine Eco-label Japan Council.*

*In order to develop the new organization as an internationally competent one, it became a difficult task to find a person who was not only knowledgeable about the fishing industry but also had a broad international sense, was familiar with the fishing industry and management, and was also familiar with the domestic distribution industry and the international community. As Kakizoe san was a former vice president of JFA and well known for his personality, we asked him to be the only one, even though we knew it was impossible, but we were all relieved to hear that he was willing to accept the offer for the sake of the development of the*

*industry.*

*With this, the new system was in place, and as you all know, after that, thanks to the energetic work of Chairperson Kakizoe and the hard work of all the staff, MEL JAPAN has grown to the point where it has established its current solid position by winning the approval of GSSI.*

*It is my pride to have been involved in the early days of MEL JAPAN that it has developed, gained international recognition, and has become a major force for the distribution industry and companies that export seafood seeking eco-labels to promote SDGS in Japan. I hope that MEL JAPAN will continue to take even greater leaps forward to serve as a strong partner to Japanese fishing, aquaculture and fisheries companies for the sake of sustainable fisheries.*

*(Please accept my apologies if you find any misconceptions as the above, it is my poorly written recollection.)*

*Thank you, Shige san. The inaugural general meeting of the MEL Council as a general incorporated association, held on December 1, 2016, was a lonely start for only two members, Japan Fisheries Association and Zengyoren. We will never forget this day of "today begins." We look forward to your continued guidance.*

## **6. Events**

① *Exhibited at the Fisheries Agency booth at the 2023 Conference on Carbon Neutrality held April 1-2 at Makuhari Messe. The event, which was sponsored by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the Ministry of the*

*Environment, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, Fisheries Agency, Chiba Prefecture and others, was an unprecedented event where popular idol groups stood on the central stage and in each booth to hand*

out promotional materials and give explanations.

The Fisheries Agency booth was designed to promote "Fish Day" and promote the spread of eating fish culture, and to make visitors aware of Marine eco-label, which promotes the sustainable use of marine products. MEL gained about 1000 direct Instagram followers (about 200,000

followers via ambassadors), but the visitors who responded to the questionnaire were apathetic toward the Ecolabel (almost no one is aware of the Ecolabel), which is a great cause for reflection, and we will seriously consider what approaches will be effective for such apathetic groups in the future.



MELのブースとアイドルグループの活動の様様

#### MEL Booth and Idol Group Activities

② This year's Seafood Expo Global will be held in Barcelona, Spain on April 25 - 27, following on from last year. Mr. Kanno, Executive Director of MEL, will also join the meeting with GSSI, CSC and others. I will report the situation in next month's issue of MEL News.

③ 'Sustainable Procurement Code 'at Osaka-Kansai Expo, two years away  
The public comment on (Plan 2) was closed on April 14. MEL has offered to remove the Ver. 2.0 part of MEL Ver. 2.0, which had been approved by GSSI. (We

have repeatedly asked GSSI to remove it, but the website has not been corrected yet.)

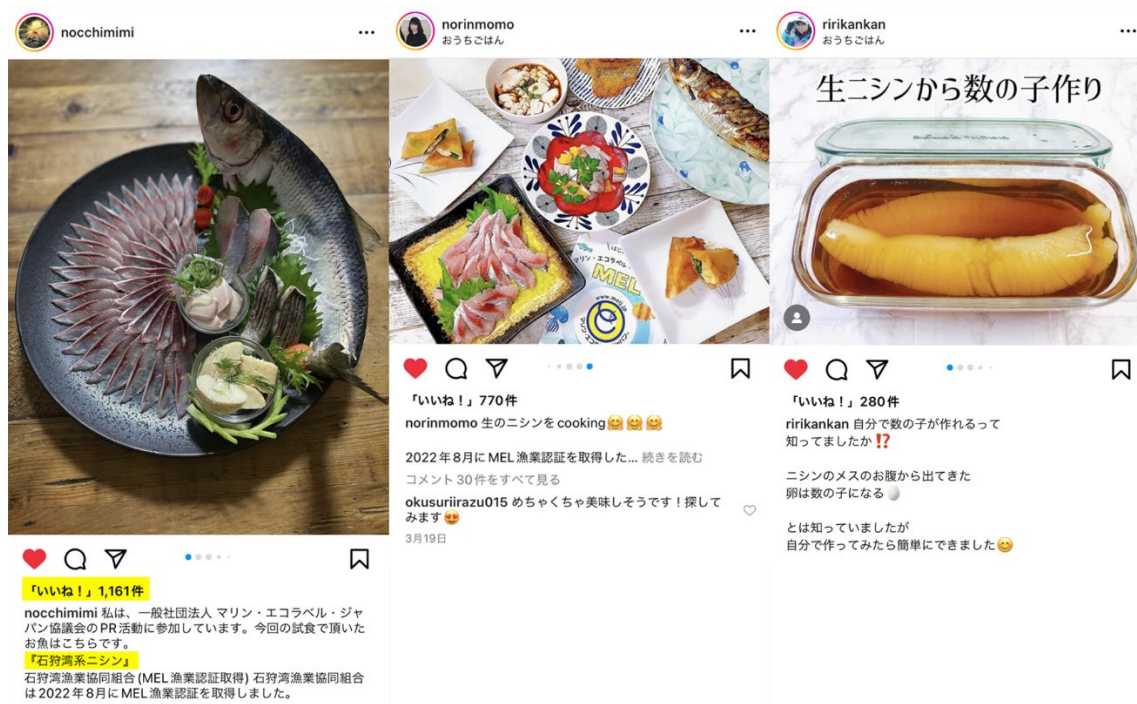
As you are aware, the Osaka and Kansai Expo is expected to attract 28.2 million visitors, with a huge demand of 56 million meals even for 2 meals per person. Compared to the Tokyo Olympic Games, the number of operators will naturally be larger, we will soon get concrete ideas on how to approach them. I look forward to active sales promotion by certified entities that will lead to expansion of the domestic and international markets.

#### 7. SNS posts

We published a report on Ishikari Bay herring in the February issue of MEL News

by Executive Director Wada of the Ishikari Bay Fishery Cooperative, and this month

we asked our ambassadors to challenge them on Instagram. to cook herrings, here are the posts of



Executive Director Wada recommended to eat in raw, and ambossodors said “I was scared to try, but in fact it was very good!”

Thank you to all the ambassadors.

### EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT

Yuriko Shiraishi, a member of the Advisory Board of the MEL Council and a representative of the Women's Forum Fish (WFF), was recently awarded the Order of Agriculture in Cote d'Ivoire, where she is staying. Her continued contribution to the revitalization of women in the fishing villages of Cote d'Ivoire has been highly appreciated, and we are very pleased and would like to offer our sincere congratulations. Some of her activities were introduced in MEL News August 2021, issue 41, "MEL Eco Bag: Going to Africa."





授賞式後の記念撮影 白石代表と一人おいてトウレ漁業大臣

*A commemorative photo taken after the award ceremony, with Ms. Shiraishi in white jacket and Minister of Fisheries Mr. Taule in black suits*

*Although the response has been eased since last month, we are still on alert for the coronavirus infection, but we are convinced by the fact that the first face-to-face events in four years have been held in various parts of the country, we feel more excitement rather than those of online. It is said 90% of Japanese still wears a mask now, so I hope we can be active without a mask in the summer months ahead.*

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