



Jun 30th 2023

Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

## **MEL NEWS VOL. 63 (ENGLISH EDITION)**

Dear MEL Partners:

*On May 30, the 2022 fishery and aquaculture production statistics were released by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.*

*As you know, production was 3.86 million tons which is 7.5% lower than last year, breaking the 4 million tons mark for the first time since statistics under the current system began in 1956.*

*In the sea fisheries, although there was a resurgence of Hokkaido salmon and herring, the overall figure was down 9.4%, and in the sea aquaculture, there was a slight increase in silver salmon, scallops and oysters, but the overall figure was down 1.7%, which is a painful figure. All things aside, mackerel was 125,000 tons lower and bonito was 70,000 tons lower, which are both popular fish for Japanese dish that had been caught in large quantities. The catch of Pacific saury and Japanese common squid has already dropped sharply, and there are concerns about the collapse of Japanese culture of eating fish and the seafood processing business that supports the local economy.*

*The fiscal 2022 White Paper on Fisheries featured "Food Security in Japanese Fisheries Industry," delving once again into the problems with seafood as food in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian War.*

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

*The number of new certified entities this month will be two for aquaculture and four for CoC. Overall, there were 22 fisheries certifications, 63 aquaculture certifications and 140 CoC certifications, for a total of 225.*

*In addition, rainbow trout has been newly added to the list of certified fish species, with 21 fish species in fisheries and 14 in aquaculture obtaining MEL CoC certification.*

## **2. MEL Regular general meeting**

The 8th Ordinary General Meeting of the MEL Council was held on June 16. Since our founding, the Grand Conference Room of Japan Fisheries Association has been the standard meeting place, but this time, it was held in a rented meeting room in the Croscope Urbanet near our new office with full specifications for the first time in four years. Mr. Nobuyuki Shikasho, Assistant Director of the Fisheries Agency attended.

As a matter of resolution, we received approval for the activity report and financial results for fiscal 2022. In terms of human resources, Mr. Hirofumi Yamazaki resigned our board of directors and Mr. Toru Odano was elected as a new director due to internal personnel changes at Mitsubishi Corporation. I would like to thank Mr. Yamazaki, the former director, for his contributions to the management of the MEL Council and wish him all the best in his new position.

Best regards, Mr. Odano.

The business plan and budget for fiscal year 2023 were approved for reporting.

After the Annual General Meeting, the 32 th Board of Directors meeting was held, and as matters to be resolved, revisions to the Regulations for the Management of the Use of the Logo Mark were made, new members were approved, and as matters to be reported, the Management Review (Operational status of the scheme and activities of the accreditation and certification body) was reported, the guidelines for the establishment of the Advisory Board were changed, and overseas activities were reported.

All MEL Secretariat will work hard to be of further assistance to the "new era of Marine eco-labels," and we ask for your continued support.

## **3. Voice from Certified Entities**

### **"About the Aonori Aquaculture (Wirrock) in Matsukawaura"**

**Soma Futaba Fishery Cooperative  
Kimiyo Suzuki, Matsukawaura Area Manager**

Matsukawaura is a lagoon in the city of Soma in the northern part of Fukushima Prefecture and has been selected as one of the 100 most scenic places in Japan for its scenic beauty. We, the fishermen of the Matsukawaura area of the Soma

Futaba Fisheries Cooperative Association, grow Aonori in Matsukawaura and were producing over 1,000 tons per year (raw nori equivalent), but the earthquake on March 11, 2011 caused catastrophic damage.

*After that, the farm was quickly restored, but due in part to the effects of radioactive materials, shipments were not resumed until 2018, 7 years after the earthquake. In addition, although shipments resumed, there*

*were concerns about reputational damage to seafood products of Fukushima, so it was unclear whether they would really be able to secure a market if they were simply produced as they were before the disaster.*



***Cultivated Aonori (left) and harvested one (Wittrock)***

*Therefore, we introduced a dust eliminator to improve the quality of Aonori and enhance its competitiveness, and we also obtained MEL certification by tightening aquaculture management. At first, some were skeptical about MEL's efforts, but we have been able to continue our efforts to date, and our brokers have been able to obtain distribution-processing stage certification.*

*As a result, products with the MEL mark are in circulation, so please pick them up if you find them. The charm of Aonori of Matsukawaura is, after all, its fragrance. By adding a pinch to the*

*miso soup, the usual miso soup can be sumptuous, and also tempura or tsukudani is delicious. In recent years, our female staff have developed Western-style recipes that use Aonori for toast and pizza, so this recipe is also recommended for young people. In addition, the company's efforts to acquire MEL have been recognized by Miyagi Co-op, which now handles as part of their own Megumino brand. I would like to take this opportunity to appreciate.*

*We will continue to work to improve the quality and expand production of Aonori, and we appreciate your cooperation.*

*Thank you, Suzuki san. There is also the issue of discharging treated water into the*

*ocean, which is troubling, but please take good care of your connection with Miyagi Co-op. We are pleased that CoC certified entities are selling Aonori in MEL logo packaging.*

#### **4.Column**

##### **Sakaiminato Fishing Port in the Sea of Japan**

**Sakaiminato Fisheries Promotion Association  
Toshimi Ejiri , Senior Managing Director**

*Sakaiminato Fishing Port's signature early summer feature, bluefin tuna, was landed for the first time on May 25, 2023. Five days earlier than last year, a total of 60.9 tons, ranging from 80 to 212 kilograms, and an average unit price of more than 2500 yen per kilogram were achieved. We expect to*

*clear the Japan Sea fishing quota of 1800 tons without a doubt. When I asked the fishermen at the scene, he said there saw a lot of them. We hear good tuna catches in various parts of Japan, and we would like to see a review of the international cap soon.*



*Looking back at the history of tuna in the Sea of Japan, the first catch was made by a purse seiner in 1982. That year, an average of 119 kilograms of bluefin tuna was landed about 1400 tons.*

*There were sightings of tuna migrating in the Sea of Japan the previous year, Kyowa Suisan Co., Ltd. chartered a*

*Cessna plane to search for them and found that they were indeed there. We immediately prepared the nets and hired veteran fish-watching sailors from the Sanriku region to prepare to catch them, and at the same time prepared the professional to fillet them to the market and others who had experience with former tuna longline vessels. As a result, a record 950 million yen of them was landed during a poor catch season in summer.*

*Since then, there has been a steady stream of tuna catches, and in the spirit of promoting this natural bounty of "bluefin tuna" from the Sea of Japan throughout the country, in 2010 the Sakaiminato Wild Bluefin Tuna PR*

*Promotion Council was formed by the public and private sectors. We, the Sakaiminato Fisheries Promotion Association, began our activities as its secretariat. The business consists of a spot sale where tuna is brought to supermarkets in the Kansai and Kanto regions on the day of the first auction, and an explanation and tasting of tuna at local kindergartens, elementary schools and general technical high schools. In addition, sales of PR goods, especially tuna polo shirts, have been very popular and are inexpensive, with 33 colors available, and about 2000 pieces are sold every year. Thankfully, they are worn instead of summer uniforms at city offices and banks. Some devotees have more than 20 different colors on their own.*

*The best part of the festival is the Tuna Thanksgiving Festival, which attracts more than 5000 visitors from inside and outside the prefecture. Starting with the Tuna Cutting Show, many stalls are lined with tuna fillets, nigiri-zushi, grilled sliced heads, simmered giblets and other truly tuna dishes at reasonable prices. Nearly 100 people, including city council members, prefectural and municipal employees, the general public, and local high school students, have volunteered to participate, and we can only express our appreciation for the strength of the strong bonds of the Sakaiminato fishing port.*

*There were many twists and turns in the history of Sakaiminato. From 1992 to 1996, it won the title of the nation's top landing port for its bountiful sardine catch, but then the economy took a nosedive due to a sharp decline in sardine numbers, which led to a decline in the number of purse-seine fishing boats and the bankruptcy of a meal factory. At the height of the fishing season, signs of high-class restaurants and clubs lit up the entertainment district on the street, but that aspect has now completely disappeared.*

*At that time, the trouble of drunken fellow sailor was out of sight, and the sirens of the frequently dispatched police cars were also out of sight. In the nighttime downtown area, the voices of Taiwanese and Filipino women were echoing, but as time has passed, the number of technical interns and special-skilled workers from Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, and other countries who work on fishing boats and in seafood processing plants has increased. With the declining birthrate and aging population, it is no exaggeration to say that they are the saviors of Sakaiminato's seafood industry.*

*It is not all gloomy, but recently the amount landed is 105000 tons (4th in Japan) and the amount is 21.6 billion yen (5th in Japan), showing signs of a revival.*

*Notably, the Tottori Prefectural Fish*

*Market is renewed to a unique building even in modern, safe and clean compared to others in Japan. Market tours are now free, and if you sign up through our website, you can also enjoy the sight of sardines, mackerel, horse mackerel and red snow crab landing with a fish guide. The staffs with good skill of our association are working on that fish*

*guide, so please visit us. When you come to Sanin area, why don't you stop by to try the fresh and rich flavored seafood? There are many Yokai objects on Kitaro Road, so I'm sure your family will enjoy it. We are looking forward to your visit.*

*Thank you, Ejiri san. The Sakaiminato bluefin tuna has been criticized harshly for catching spawning stocks anyway. I'm sure there are a lot of ships operating from other prefectures, but I hope you all do the right work to follow the rules and increase the brand value.*

*These days, there are large cruise ships coming into port, sardine catches are gradually returning, and I look forward to the bright future of FISH (F for Fish, I for International, S for Ship, Haunted: H for Yokai town named after Mizuki Shigeru of Gegege no Kitaro. I have been appointed this FISH ambassador) Sakaiminato.*

#### **5. Development of MEL Certified Standards for Fish Feed and Fish Meal and Oil**

*On June 2, we held an exchange meeting (working group: discussion with experts at the previous stage of standard development) on the draft MEL formula feed certification standard and criteria for compliance (review guide) with Tomohiko Koshiishi, Hidekazu Suzuki, and Yutaka Hanaoka, all members of the standards committee selected by the Japan aquaculture Feed Association.*

*Furthermore, on June 20, I reported the*

*current situation and explained how to proceed with MEL to the Aquaculture Division of the Fisheries Agency. We will then exchange views and meet with the Japan Fish Meal Association. We plan to complete the draft soon, officially launch a standards committee, announce the development of standards on our website, and start developing specific standards and developing an examination system.*

## 6. Promotional Information - One Little Good Story



**Kaitenzushi Haneda Market storefront and MEL logo**

*I had an opportunity to speak with Ryohei Nomoto, president of Haneda Market, at a meeting the other day.*

*As you all know, Nomoto san is taking on a variety of challenges as a standard-bearer for the advanced distribution of marine products. I heard that fish with MEL-certified logos are gaining popularity at restaurants operated by his company. They launched a seasonal limited menu of*

*sea bass from Kaiko Bussan in Funabashi City, Chiba Prefecture, which is MEL certified, although the high price (2 volumes for 700 yen), the number of orders received by customers was unusual. I immediately went to the store ("Kaitenzushi Haneda Market Gransta Tokyo Station" in the basement of Tokyo Station) and was delighted to find a MEL-certified logo on the store's easel, along with a description of the pre-treatment done by President Ono of Kaiko Bussan. Even though it was a weekday afternoon, it was very popular.*

*After hearing from President Nomoto about the company's policy to handle more certified products in the future, which is currently only one product, we finally heard about how MEL can be helpful to restaurant operators.*

*I appreciate all the people in the supply chain who values MEL certification. And most of all, we thank our customers for choosing products with eco-labels. I look forward to working with you in the future.*

## 7. This year's MEL ambassador has been decided.

*Seven ambassadors and six monitors for the current fiscal year, which were publicly offered from May 12 to 31, have been selected. The total number of followers is 260,000 for men and women in the age group of 30 to 50. We have received*

*applications with the motivation "I like fish" and "I want to contribute to society," and half of them have been continued since last year.*

*We held a kickoff meeting on June 22, attended by seven people, including three*

online. It is very positive and we can expect a good transmission with impact

this year as well. We look forward to their output.



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**EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT**

*It's the season for prime-time sardines, and you can find large, fatty sardines in stores. The recommendations of the Study Group on Fisheries in Response to Changes in the Marine Environment, released by the Fisheries Agency on June 7, go into measures to target fish species that can be caught in place of fish species that are no longer available, as well as part-time work with aquaculture. None of this is easy, but in any case, growth industrialization requires action.*

*Every day, the early start of the rainy season and a series of approaching typhoons make us feel the global warming.*

*I wish you all the best of health and success.*

*Marine Eco-Label Japan Council Secretariats*

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