



Jul 31th 2023

Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

## **MEL NEWS VOL. 64 (ENGLISH EDITION)**

Dear MEL Partners:

*El Nino brought the hot summer. The local summer festival season is also deeply connected to seafood culture. Hangesho (the 11th day after the summer solstice) is July 2 this year, followed by the Gion Festival, also known as the Pike Conger Festival, on July 17, and the Midsummer Day of the Ox on July 30.*

*On July 3, an opinion advertisement for Kanoya City in Kagoshima Prefecture was published in a national newspaper. It said, "Wouldn't it be better if the Ox Day was a cow's day instead of an eel's day?." Kanoya, one of the leading livestock markets in the country, is also active in the cultivation of amberjack and yellowtail, and the Kanoya Fishery Cooperative has obtained MEL certification, but even with that, it made me consider how do we deal with diversity as well as continuing this advertising and tradition?*

*I'm sorry to hear about the hot weather. How about some sweet potato shochu on the rocks and fresh amberjack sashimi?*

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

*The number of new certified entities this month will be one for fisheries and one for CoC. As a special note, Japan Far Seas Purse Seine Fishing Association obtained fisheries certification for the large and medium-sized purse-seine fishery in WCPFC waters for skipjack and yellowfin tuna. Due to the large size of the group, peer review and other review procedures seemed to take some time, but the certification went into effect less than a year after the application was*

*received in September 2022. We appreciate the efforts of the Association Secretariat and our members.*

*Now, all 26 vessels belonging to the Japan Far Sea Purse Seine Fishery Association, together with the Fukuichi Fisheries acquired MEL, are eligible for certification. It is an important fishery that supports the Japanese food culture, including katsuobushi, and we hope that they will take advantage of the MEL certification.*

## 2. Voice from Certified Entities

### MEL Aquaculture Certification for 'Mutsu Bay Aquaculture Scallops' in Aomori

Masanori Kumaki,

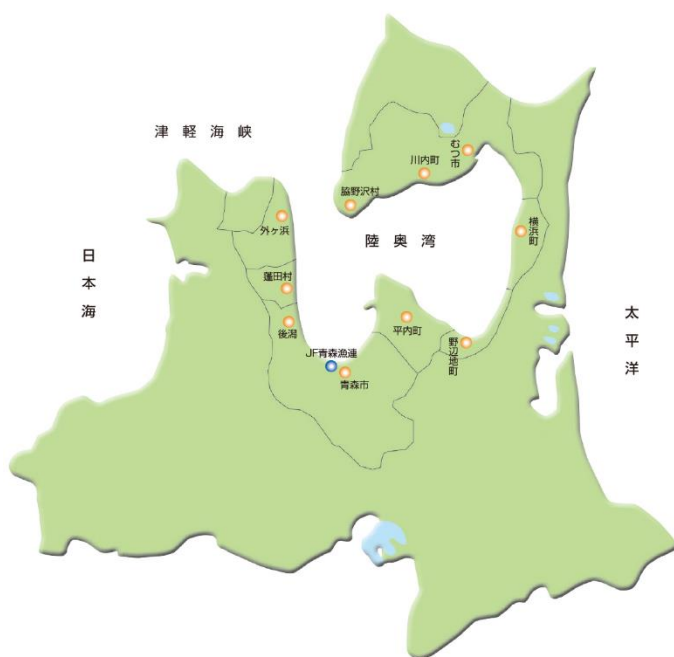
Executive director of Aomori Federation of Fisheries Cooperative Associations

#### (1) Mutsu Bay, an excellent fishing ground created by nature

Mutsu Bay in Aomori Prefecture is surrounded on three sides by the Shimokita Peninsula to the east, the Tsugaru Peninsula to the west, and the Hakkoda mountains to the south. The narrow mouth of the bay makes it a relatively calm sea of waves.

In Mutsu Bay, snowmelt from the

Shirakami Mountains, a World Heritage Site, and the Hakkoda mountain range, a heavy snowfall area, produces nutrient-rich mineral water that is poured from the river into the sea, making it an ideal fishing ground for the nature-created scallop farming.



陸奥湾をとりまく10漁協、  
900事業者がホタテ貝養殖を  
推進している。

- ・外ヶ浜漁協
- ・蓬田村漁協
- ・後潟漁協
- ・青森市漁協
- ・平内町漁協
- ・野辺地町漁協
- ・横浜町漁協
- ・むつ市漁協
- ・川内町漁協
- ・脇野沢村漁協

#### (2) Production and distribution and processing go hand in hand to become a key industry in Aomori

The scallops have lived in Mutsu Bay since ancient times, and the scallop fishery began in 1958, when a massive outbreak of natural shellfish occurred. Later, in 1964, they "succeeded in collecting natural seeds and seedlings,"

and in 1970, a full-scale "scallop aquaculture fishery" started.

In the same year, the Mutsu Bay scallop aquaculture fishery developed dramatically as a result of the establishment of a full-scale co-

marketing system led by the JF Aomori Fishery Federation, which combined production and distribution and processing, achieving the first handling volume of 10 billion yen in 1983. Moreover, in 1987, exceeding 15 billion yen. In 2016, we achieved a record production of 110,000 tons and

### **(3) Overview of Aomori Scallops**

There are 10 fishing cooperatives and 900 scallop-farming operators in Mutsu Bay, and they are engaged in hanging aquaculture of "Natural Seedlings, No Feeding." Annual production is around 73,000 tons, of which 75% is "half-grown shellfish" produced within 1 year of

### **(4) History of acquiring MEL**

Creating a sustainable society is a social imperative, and mass retailers and major supermarkets have just begun to demand environmental certification. Originally, scallop pendulum aquaculture was an environmentally friendly aquaculture method called "Natural Seedlings, No Feeding" and because the method of aquaculture is

handling of 25.4 billion yen. Since then, the company has maintained a stable supply of fish, playing a key role in the key industry of Aomori Prefecture as a "10 billion yen industry" and currently boasts the highest production volume of cultured scallops in Japan.

seedling harvest and sold by tender to the designated purchasers of the JF Aomori Fishery Federation. Shipments are 2% fresh and 98% processed, with 88% of this processed product sold in the form of boiled products, commonly known as "baby scallops," to mass retailers and business professionals.

the same as the one used for the management of fishing grounds, which is rooted in the community, the JF Aomori Fishery Federation became the contact point and the scale of aquaculture certification is unprecedented. This resulted in the acquisition of "local group certification."

**(5) Further strengthen sales of "King of the Taste Aomori Hotate" by utilizing MEL**



青森県漁連 熊木 正徳専務理事

**Masanori Kumaki,**  
**Executive director of Aomori**  
**Federation of Fisheries Cooperative**  
**Associations**

*The aquaculture certification obtained this time is effective only when it is certified for distribution. Therefore, when we started to acquire certification, we asked for cooperation*

*Thank you, Kumaki san. On January 6 of this year, at a New Year's party for scallop-related manufacturers and sellers held in snowy Aomori City, we held a ceremony to award MEL certificates and had a wide exchange with everyone. I remember being impressed by everyone's dedication and pride in the scallops of Mutsu Bay, symbolized by the "Gotaro Yamamoto Award" just like yesterday. This year we have heard that production will be reduced due to fewer young shellfish, but we wish the best of luck to the scallop farmers in Mutsu Bay who live in harmony with the blessed nature.*

*from processors, and at present, more than 10 designated manufacturers, including Aomori Federation of Fisheries Cooperative Associations, have obtained "distribution certification."*

*The transition of the coronavirus disease to Class 5 is expected to stimulate tourism and events in Japan, and further increase in demand is expected due to the designation of scallops as an important export item in response to the government's measures to industrialize the growth of the fishing industry.*

*With this certification, we have completed the "Environmentally friendly supply routes from production to processing and distribution" and we hope to use it to further strengthen sales of the "King of the Taste Aomori Hotate", both domestically and internationally.*

#### **4.Column**

##### **"Frozen food and seafood"**

**Hitoshi Kimura**

**Executive Director of Japan Frozen Foods Association**

#### **< Introduction of the Japan Frozen Food Association >**

*The Japan Frozen Foods Association was established in 1969, which parent organizations were the Frozen Fish Association and the Frozen Food Promotion Association. In addition, the founding members consisted of 20 companies and organizations, including 6 major fisheries companies, National Federation of Fisheries Co-operative Associations, 5 food-related companies, 7 major electronics manufacturers, and the Japan Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Industry Association. In this way, the establishment of the association was led by Fisheries companies, probably because marine products were ahead in freezing food and they paid early attention to the potential of frozen food.*

*In 1970, our association launched the Frozen Food Voluntary Inspection System, and started an accreditation system for frozen food manufacturing plants related to quality and sanitation management. This is the first certification system established by the private sector in the food industry, which allows products made at this*

*certified factory to bear the certification mark. Since then, we have continued to upgrade the content, including the introduction of a renewal system for the expiration date and HACCP compliance.*

*In addition, in 1971, the Company established the Voluntary Handling Standards for Frozen Food based on the deliberations of a committee that included representatives from the manufacturing, transportation, storage, distribution, retail and other industries. This set the control temperature for the cold chain from manufacturing to retail at -18 degrees Celsius or lower. The ingredient standard based on the Food Sanitation Act requires that the product be stored at a temperature of -15 degrees Celsius or lower, which is considered safe at a temperature where microorganisms are not able to grow. On the other hand, the handling standard of -18 degrees Celsius or less is a temperature to maintain the quality for a long time in addition to safety.*



日本冷凍食品協会 木村 均専務理事



【認定マーク】

***Hitoshi Kimura, Executive Director of Japan Frozen Foods Association***

***< What is frozen food >***

*In order to preserve a variety of foods for a long time in their fresh-picked and fresh-made state, frozen foods are formulated to meet the following four conditions, along with the aforementioned ingredient standards:*

- ① *be preprocessed*
- ② *quick frozen*
- ③ *properly packaged*

④ *Store the product at a temperature below -18 degrees Celsius*

*For this reason, unpackaged frozen seafood sold at retail stores and other stores that are not labeled as frozen foods (such as simply frozen foods), as well as home-frozen foods, are not considered frozen foods.*

***< Trends in frozen seafood >***

*Items related to seafood in frozen foods include seafood (Fish, shrimp, squid, octopus, shellfish, etc.) and seafood fries (Shrimp, oyster, etc.). In addition, many seafood products are also used as raw materials in various prepared frozen foods (Fried rice, pilaf, shumai, etc.), but since we are unable keep track of them, we monitor the*

*trends in the above two items. Both seafood and seafood fries accounted for slightly less than 10% of total frozen food production in 1980, but amid a significant increase in total production, production of both products has been on a downward trend, falling to slightly less than 3% and 2%, respectively, in 2022.*

The reasons for this are believed to be that demand for frozen foods has become more diversified as dietary habits have diversified, and that it is no longer possible to procure cheap and stable fish fry ingredients, although most of them are imported.

In the future, changes in the social environment, such as an increase in single-person households, an aging population, and the social advancement of women, are expected

to further boost the overall demand for frozen foods. But on the other hand, the procurement of all raw materials is expected to be in line with the SDGs. At present, the use of certified raw materials such as MEL is low in frozen foods related to seafood, but in the future, the use of certified raw materials will lead to higher added value, rather than simply responding to social requirements for raw materials.

Table: Trends in frozen seafood

(単位：千トン)

年	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2022	2022/1980	2022/2000
水産物	53.5 (9.5%)	85.6 (8.3%)	103.7 (6.9%)	62.1 (4.4%)	46.1 (3.0%)	44.2 (2.8%)	0.83	0.43
水産物フライ	52.7 (9.4%)	76.5 (7.5%)	52.8 (3.5%)	29.2 (2.1%)	31.9 (2.1%)	26.8 (1.7%)	0.51	0.51
全生産量	562.2	1,025.4	1,498.7	1,396.0	1,551.2	1,598.8	2.84	1.07

(注1) 1. 水産物：魚類、エビ類、いか・たこ類、貝類、その他水産物

2. 水産物フライ：えび、かき、いか、魚フライ

3. 下段（ ）は構成比

(資料) (一社)日本冷凍食品協会

Thank you, Kimura san. While frozen foods have grown in response to the demands of the times, we hope that MEL's activities will contribute to the further development of frozen foods as we respond to a major new movement to contribute to the SDGs.

### 5.MEL Audit Program

The first MEL Audit training program of the year will be held on July 26 and 27. It is a brush-up training for those who already have the qualification of judges. The event was held at an important time for MEL and the audits, such as the new

era of the Marine Eco-Label and approval under the new GSSI standards, so the number of participants was 21 on an application basis. We can see their serious efforts despite the heat wave.



## 6. Events

On July 7, SHUFUREN, Association of Consumer Organizations held a lecture on "Thinking about the Current and Future of Fisheries: SDGs and Marine Products," inviting Hiroyuki Matsuda, professor emeritus and special assistant to the president of Yokohama National University, and MEL Kakizoe as lecturers. Under the leadership of MEL advisory

board member Yuko Hirano, Head of the Social Affairs Department, Ms. Kawamura, the president and Mr. Arita, Head of the Environment Department (former President) also attended the meeting, and both the Shufuren Kaikan venue and online participation were successful, I felt the interest from the attendees with many questions asked.



7月7日開催 「漁業の今と未来を考える－SDGsと水産物」

On July 17, the Marine Day Project 2023 in Shiodome, sponsored by the Maritime Affairs Bureau of the the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, was held for the first time in 4 years. Although the hot weather, many families came to the event and it was a great

success. The third MEL ambassadors also came and submitted very good reports. The number of MEL SNS followers has also increased, and we are considering various approaches that will keep our children interested.





右：ririkankanさんのSNS投稿(<https://www.instagram.com/ririkankan/>)

**7. MEL Workshop**

*Preparations are underway for a MEL workshop on August 23 at the site of the 25th Japan International Seafood Show. Since the new Executive Director of GSSI, Lisa Goch é, who was replaced in March of this year, will be visiting Japan, I would like to take this opportunity to discuss issues that Japan and MEL should address, such as the approval of the "GSSI Global Benchmarking Tool Ver. 2.0" and MEL.*

*In addition, she is planning to visit the relevant places to gain a deeper understanding of the state of Japanese fisheries industry. To ensure the presence of "world-recognized MEL from Japan," the timing of its approval by the GSSI under the new standards would be the best publicity effect. After finalizing the details, we will begin the announcement early next month.*

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**EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT**

*The three consecutive holidays in July, including Marine Day, brought intense heat to Japan. The media hustled to the prevention of water accidents and heat stroke, but the heavy rain caused by linear precipitation zone at the end of the rainy season, which occurred in various parts of the country, is telling us how difficult it is to take measures. I would like to express my heartfelt sympathy to all those affected by the disaster. The last El Nino in 2018 was severely damaged by record-breaking heat and high temperatures on agricultural and marine products, but it also suffered from typhoons. Let's continue to be vigilant and prepare for countermeasures.*

*Marine Eco-Label Japan Council Secretariats*

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