



Sep 31th 2023

Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

MEL NEWS VOL. 66 (ENGLISH EDITION)

Dear MEL Partners:

The autumn equinox came during the lingering summer heat. I would like to express my heartfelt sympathy to all those who suffered from not only the hot weather but also the heavy rain caused by linear precipitation zones in various parts of the country and the drought caused by the lack of rainfall.

As you are aware, extreme heat is affecting the oceans of the world, not just Japan, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) reports that 48% of the world's oceans are experiencing abnormally high temperatures called "ocean heatwaves." It goes without saying that this high-water temperature is having a serious impact on weather, ecosystems and fisheries. In Japan in particular, the high-water temperatures off the eastern coast of Hokkaido and Sanriku are prominent, and there is a concern that they may adversely affect the migration of fish that prefer cold water in autumn.

At the same time, 100 years have passed since the Great Kanto Earthquake, and I am thinking of various things not only for disaster prevention but also for the survival of the fishing industry.

1. International Standardization Related

The GSSI Secretariat announced that MEL was approved by the GSSI New Standards (Global Benchmark Tool Ver. 2.0) on September 21, local time. We are sorry to have kept you waiting since the MEL Secretariat's initial expectation for approval in August was eventually delayed by one month.

In response to this, the MEL Council held a press conference on September 22, so you should have an article from a professional newspaper.

MEL became the second GSSI approval scheme in the world, following CSC (Alaska RFM) in July.

Taking this opportunity to become one of the world leaders in promoting a sustainable fisheries industry, we hope to continue to hone our skills and evolve as a "MEL from Japan, recognized by the world" by joining forces with all those involved, and to strive to achieve our own business growth.



2. Status of MEL Certification

The number of new certified entities this month will be one for aquaculture and two for CoC. As a special note, inland aquaculture of RIKEN FOOD Co., Ltd. was effective in one

case. Of course, this is the first time for a green laver, but it strongly foreshadows the further spread of inland aquaculture.

3.Voice from Certified Entities

"To add value to Atka mackerel"

***Go Takeda, President and Chief Executive Officer
Marusui Sapporo Chuou Suisan Co., Ltd.***

Our company obtained MEL CoC certification in January 2021 as a wholesaler in the Sapporo Central

Wholesale Market. In December of last year, Rirei Fisheries Eco-label Promotion Council obtained

certification for the Atka mackerel gillnet fishery, and this fiscal year marks the first year that Atka mackerel has been treated as a certified species. Our company and the Rishiri-Rebun area have traded it for a long time, and in the last fiscal year the amount of frozen Atka mackerel handled in the Rirei area was about 2000 tons. In addition, Marusui Refrigeration Co., Ltd. Ace Food Department, a group company of us, has been producing and selling cut open and dried Atka

mackerel and Atka mackerel sticks using the fish from Rirei for a long time. In April this year, they acquired MEL CoC certification (for primary and secondary processing). As a result, we have established a connection between producers, wholesalers and processors, and we will continue to sell MEL-certified products to our customers in and outside of Hokkaido, including mass retailers.



札幌中央水産 竹田 剛社長



マルスイ冷蔵で加工中のホッケ

Photo of President Takeda and Atka mackerel processed in their plant

5.Column

Seafood Sustainability and Japan's Opportunities

I wish to thank the MEL Japan Council for inviting me to contribute to MEL NEWS. The more we collectively communicate about the need for more

Lisa Goché
Interim Executive Director of GSSI

sustainable seafood, the better our chances are of advancing responsible practices to ensure the global food supply.



Lisa Goché 氏

I'd also like to mention that, by the time this is published, GSSI will likely have already announced that MEL Japan has successfully re-benchmarked to version 2 of our Global Benchmark Tool (GBT). It is a rigorous and difficult process based on FAO criteria. There are a lot of standards out there. Many cannot comply with the requirements of our GBT. In part that is kind of the point. It should not be easy. Consumers, seafood suppliers, and buyers need to know which eco-labels to trust. The efforts and continuous improvement MEL Japan has demonstrated since they were first recognized in 2019 show the importance of credible eco-labeling standards that, like MEL, are internationally recognized. A key to revitalizing Japan's seafood sector is the Japan eco-label's third-party verification of sustainability.

Now to a bit about GSSI. The GSSI promotes environmental stewardship and social responsibility across the seafood

value chain to feed a growing population and decrease food insecurity. Various GSSI solutions help buyers and suppliers develop and implement their ESG policies, and communicate them globally to showcase their efforts. Ultimately this also benefits consumers.

I was delighted when I was asked to speak at the workshop on August 23 organized by the Japan Fisheries Association and MEL Japan on the "New Age of Seafood Eco-label". First of all, it's a great topic. Second, GSSI is working to increase its engagement in Asia. Considering Japan's importance, this fit perfectly. And lastly, Japan is my favorite country. I was a student there years ago. Later I spent many years traveling around visiting producers to help them comply with US export requirements. Japan, its people, and it's fascinating, gracious culture are close to my heart. After several years, I was grateful for the chance to return.

I have been in the seafood industry for decades in various roles across the wild, aquaculture and feed sectors. I have worn many hats, but I am first and foremost a business-minded person. I understand the need for growth, profit margins, employment, increased production, and the importance of seafood trade values to businesses and economies.

What I also know is that businesses and economies cannot thrive well into the future if the business plan does not tightly link to environmental and social sustainability. Medium- and long-term success strategies that are properly structured naturally lead to sustainability. Without one we cannot have the other. Simply put, we will not have a business or industry if wild fisheries and aquaculture resources disappear in the future. Not to mention the devastating impact on society's nutritional and food security needs.

As I prepared my slides for the workshop and meetings with the Japan Fisheries Association, Fisheries Agency, and major Japanese seafood companies, I emphasized this message We discussed why sustainability matters, global pressures to improve, how we can get there, and what GSSI can do to help.

In all of this I also wanted to convey my opinion about Japan's role and opportunities. Japanese people know very well that seafood has been a key part of the diet for centuries. In addition to diet, it has deep roots in culture, communities, and the economy. Despite that, awareness of the need for sustainable resource management, ESG policies, and eco-labels is not what it should be. Since I started doing business in Japan, it seems support has been slow to grow, especially in comparison to other well-developed economies like Europe and

North America. The IMF estimates Japan's economy will be the third largest in 2023. Given that and the links between Japan and seafood, Japan should be a leader in this area. Nationally, and internationally.

As I was researching for my presentations, I was pleased to find on the Japan Fisheries Agency's website, in English, a report for 2021 with plans for 2022 that stated many of the points above (and more). I saw the government is addressing human rights, IUU fishing, healthier fish stocks, and other key topics. The New Basic Plan for Fisheries formulated in March 2022 provides detailed information about the need for improving fisheries and aquaculture management. The Agency also made a strong case for why, and how, the Japanese seafood industry's trend of declining production, demand, and export value can be reversed. I learned a lot. The statistics JFA provided were impactful and, to me, even a bit shocking.

The workshop was a wonderful experience. I enjoyed all the other speakers' presentations. From each of them, I also learned a lot. Each organization's perspectives weaved a compelling case for why improving sustainability of seafood matters. I also found it surprising that even though we did not collaborate on what we were going to say in advance, we all presented similar and complementary messages. In

the Q&A session that followed the presentations, questions from the audience showed the seriousness felt by the attendees toward the topic.

Later, when I had the honor of meeting with several prestigious companies, I was equally impressed with their serious approach to these topics. They took the time to explain to me their current efforts and future goals. If more organizations of all sizes showed this type of vision, it would really benefit Japan and the rest of the world.

As the Japanese government and seafood industry expand their commitment to ESG, transparency and communication in both English and Japanese are crucial. If you do it but don't tell people (domestically and

overseas), they won't know. If they don't know, many governments, buyers and NGOs will make assumptions. Unfortunately, assumptions are often negative.

It matters for Japan's reputation. It is also important that Japan recognizes a responsibility to lead across Asia and beyond. For the good of society both in Japan and abroad.

My deepest gratitude to everyone I met in Japan. Your kindness and support made me feel at home. And, my thanks to all of you for taking your valuable time to read this. I hope we can all work together to raise awareness of the benefits of more sustainable seafood. Japan has a lot of opportunities here, and it really feels to me like the time is now.

6. Event

We set up the booth in part of the booth of Fisheries Agency at "NIPPON FOOD SHIFT FES." held at the Marunouchi-Nakadori Street from September 23 to 24, sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Although it was still in the heat of summer, it was crowded

with people with a strong interest in food, mainly young families. MEL also announced that it was the second scheme in the world to be approved for the new GSSI standards, giving a lot of publicity with "MEL in Japan, MEL in the world."



NIPPON FOOD SHIFT FES東京の水産庁ブースに出展させていただきました

MEL booth at NIPPON FOOD SHIFT FES.

.....

EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT

Thank you, Takeda san. We hope that by bringing not only fishermen, but also processing companies, as well as the entire retail, dining out and supply chain closer to consumers, we can achieve added value through MEL certification.

Thank you Lisa. I spent a few days with her and was honestly surprised that she came to Japan with the knowledge about us in such great detail. We have gotten a clue to how we can increase the number of pro-Japanese people overseas about the sustainable use of marine products. I will do my best with her last words, "This is the time."

I would like to ask for your continued guidance in raising the profile of Japanese sustainable fisheries industry in the world.

It is said that 100 years ago, after the Great Kanto Earthquake, the word "tenken" became popular. It is said to have received a "divine rebuke" for the arrogance that spread among the Japanese through the Sino-Japanese War, the Russo-Japanese War, and the First World War. In the 100 years since, how should we perceive the effects of climate change, which will intensify every year? The IPCC has already ruled that extreme weather is a man-made disaster, and papers published in scientific journals point to a weakening of deep ocean currents around the Earth over thousands of years of subduction from the North Atlantic. As this deep ocean current plays a role in regulating

the climate and forming fishing grounds, it demands wisdom and action in how to respond to the "natural" events that will befall humanity in the future.

This year's National Convention for Enriching the Sea was held in Akkeshi-cho, Hokkaido. It has come to my attention that Hokkaido, surrounded by lush waters, is also suffering from climate change. I salute all the efforts you have made in recovering from the accidental damage caused by the red tide the year before last and wish you all the best for your future.

Marine Eco-Label Japan Council Secretariats

Nittochi Uchisaiwaicho Bldg. 3F, 1-2-1 Uchisaiwaicho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0011 Japan

URL: <https://melj.jp/eng/> Email: info@melj.jp