



Oct 30th 2023

Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

MEL NEWS VOL. 67 (ENGLISH EDITION)

Dear MEL Partners:

This year's heat, which has made headlines every day since the start of observations, also seems to be running out of breath. We don't have any good news for fall fish either, but we hope the catch will pick up later in the month. It brings back the bitter memories of a time when people were called "latecake" in the trade language, breaking prices and injuring those who ran in the first half. Lack of quantity is not enough for processing and other industries, and in addition to the catch problem, I am worried that the ecosystem that supports the food chain, which starts with the plankton that feed on it, has been disrupted, resulting in smaller and less greasy fish.

1. International Standardization Related

The GSSI secretariat informed us that our approval of GSSI's benchmark tool, Ver. 2.0, which was published on September 21 (local time), was finally approved by all 12 board members. We have received positive responses from both inside and outside the

country, and we would like to express our sincere appreciation for the sincere efforts of all concerned, including those who have obtained certification. I hope that this opportunity will further promote awareness within and outside the country.

2. Status of MEL Certification

The number of new certified entities this month will be two for CoC. Applications continue to be slow. In addition, from the standpoint of the principles of maintaining robust and reliable certification, it is

increasingly taking time to respond to peer reviewers' comments. We are earnestly working on this as an international standard scheme.

3.Voice from Certified Entities

The oyster season has arrived. Even in Jigozen, Hiroshima, they overcame the hot summer and are growing high-quality oysters. This month, we asked Mr. Kenichiro Inoue of the Hiroshima Fisheries Federation Sales Division, who was in charge of CoC certification, about the process of obtaining the certification.

"To Leverage MEL Certification of Jigozen Oysters"

**Kenichiro Inoue,
Hiroshima Fisheries Federation Sales Division**

At first, we had one goal in mind when we acquired Jigozen oysters CoC certification as the Hiroshima Fisheries Federation. It is to increase the quantity of raw oysters from Jigozen. We were aware that our customers had long appreciated the quality superiority of Jigozen oysters, but

unfortunately, the amount of raw materials we received had decreased year by year, so we had no choice but to reduce the sales volume of our products. We also had many inquiries from customers asking if we could ship more Jigozen products, and we were struggling.



地御前カキの収穫作業



広島県漁連工場の生カキ触診ライン

Jigozen oyster harvesting / Fresh oyster palpation line at Hiroshima Gyoren Plant

When I inquired with the Jigozen Fishery Cooperative about the MEL certification, I heard from a producer in Jigozen who was actively working on the use of MEL that it might be better to obtain

CoC certification in order to increase the quantity of raw materials to be purchased, so we decided to aim for CoC certification.

The acquisition of CoC certification

itself is only the starting point for achieving the goal of increasing the quantity of raw materials purchased, and from now on, we must consider the challenges to achieve this goal. The first step is to get the producers to agree with us on the quality of our jigozen oyster products and our product development initiatives. It is very difficult to know exactly what to do, and I think we have no choice but to grope our way forward. Next, we would like to address the issue of making consumers aware of MEL certified products. Since this product has already established its brand as a Jigozen oyster product,

we hope that MEL's traceability system will guarantee the origin and help our customers gain the trust of business owners and consumers. We also believe that MEL certification will promote sustainable production that is environmentally friendly to consumers.

If MEL eventually became an opportunity to deepen mutual understanding between producers and consumers through its Jigozen oyster products, I think it would have been meaningful to get CoC certification and make efforts.

5.Column

RFM and MEL: A collaboration to build our sustainable fisheries

Mark Fina

President of Certified Seafood Collaborative(CSC)

The Responsible Fisheries Management (RFM) certification program is privileged to have a close collaboration with the Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) program. I would like to thank the leadership and staff of MEL for their work in developing a

longstanding relationship between our programs. Our collaboration will continue to expand the choices of certified sustainable seafood for fisheries, seafood producers, markets, and consumers in Japan, the United States, and beyond.



CSC Mark Fina 会長

We continue to work to streamline the use of our programs for markets by developing mutual recognition of our Chain of Custody standards. Under this system, users of either program will be able to use their existing Chain of Custody certification to simplify the use of products from the partner program. We are committed to working through the technical challenges of developing mutual recognition of our Chain of Custody certifications to achieve these benefits for our patrons. We also would like to explore options for using the same auditors for both programs to further reduce costs to program participants.

We also will continue to collaborate in working with the Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative (GSSI), the entity responsible for benchmarking seafood certification programs. First, we must congratulate MEL on the renewal of its benchmark with GSSI. Our program

also received its renewal recently, so we understand the achievement that the renewal represents. MEL is a valuable partner to the RFM program on the GSSI Scheme Owner Committee, where we have worked together to help GSSI continue to elevate benchmarked certification programs and the seafood that we certify. Fishery management and sustainability are highly technical and complicated. GSSI is a critical part of providing seafood markets and consumers with reliable verification of credible certification for markets and consumers wishing to identify and access seafood certified by robust and credible programs.

Here at the RFM program, we continue to develop our program with several new initiatives. The Gulf of Mexico shrimp fisheries are currently undergoing an assessment targeting the coming winter for certification of their fisheries. If successful, this will be the third largest fishery in our program, behind the Alaska pollock and Alaska salmon fisheries. We also are developing a new module for data-limited fisheries that will ease certification for fisheries that can prove that they are well-managed and sustainable but may be challenged in certification because of data availability. This type of structure can be critical to these fisheries obtaining the recognition they deserve without

having to incur exorbitant costs developing and implementing data collection systems unnecessary for demonstrating sustainability. We are also making forays into new markets. We recently approved labels for products that will be sold in Europe, a first for our program. We continue to add new Chain of Custody certifications, with several new certifications in China and our first in Vietnam. These new label approvals and certificates will introduce our program to new markets and seafood consumers who value sustainability. We continue to see and seek out opportunities in Japan for our program. The Japanese culture's long history of valuing quality seafood and its sustainability fits perfectly with the goals of our certification program and its participating fisheries. Our program appeals to Japanese seafood markets not only because of its scientifically rigorous standards but also the limiting our scope to certification of sustainable

fisheries rather than other environmental and social objectives that are better served by experts in those fields. By maintaining this focus, we are able to minimize our administrative costs, which has allowed us to continue to serve markets without charging for logo use. In the last year, we have worked to strengthen our relationships in Japan through trade shows, marketing trips to Japan, and hosting Japanese chefs and seafood buyers on visits to the United States. We will continue to develop these relationships to ensure that Japanese markets are well-informed of the benefits available through the RFM certification program. Our partnership with the MEL program has aided our understanding of and acceptance by Japanese markets. We look forward to a long and prosperous relationship and the benefits that relationship will bring both programs.

5. Standards committee for fish feed, fish meal and fish oil

The Joint Standards Committee was held online as well as in-person on October 11. This time, the Secretariat explained the development process of the standard to date and proposed the draft of the MEL Formulated Feed Standard (Ver. 1.0), the MEL Fish Meal and Fish Oil Certification Standard (Ver. 1.0), and the criteria for compliance (examination guide) to the Standards Committee, and decided to

start detailed deliberations. The materials were distributed in advance, so we will reflect the many points raised by the committee members in future deliberations.

At this point, we are about one year behind the time frame we originally envisioned, but we will proceed with caution in consultation with the various parties concerned due to the problems of

accreditation bodies and certification bodies.

6. MEL Auditor Training Program

A training course for new applicants was held from October 25 to 27. This was the first successful event in a long time, and 15 people participated enthusiastically.

Under the GSSI standards, there is also a strict requirement to maintain and improve the screening capabilities of screening agencies, which is why auditor training is ranked as the most important project.

As of October 2023, there were 95 MEL

certified auditors, 86 from JFRCA and 9 from MERI, including 29 designated instructors, 30 judges, and 66 assistant judges (the numbers do not match because of the number of people who have multiple MEL certifications).

We are currently working on fish feed and preparing for fishmeal fish oil certification, and we recognize that these are the next issues.

7. Events

Fall is the season for events. Various events are held around the country related to fisheries, and MEL is getting more and more invitations to participate. The events we participated in this month are as below;

On October 17, 2023, JAB (Japan Association for Accreditation of Suitability), an accreditation organization, held its 30-year-old platform, and MEL also reported on its activities under the title of "Making the Marine Eco Label useful for society.". JAB has a long history of accreditation in industrial products, but in the case of marine products, the accreditation program for marine products was launched on January 30, 2018, and JAB is involved in the accreditation of the accreditation bodies JFRCAI and MERI as the accreditation body of MEL, which aims at international standardization. We ask that they play an important role in the international standardization of the marine ecolabel, as

they are the accrediting body for the certification system for agriculture and forestry prior to marine products.

We took part in the TSSS (Tokyo Sustainable Seafood Summit) held from October 17 to 19, 2023, and presented the status of MEL activities to visitors. Other exhibitors included MSC, ASC, GLOBALG.A.P and GSA, but our approval of the new GSSI standard was the highlight and there was a lot of interaction. It had many programs in three days under the theme of "World Food Security Strategy for Fisheries and Challenge of Japan in the Year of Return to SDGs," but the emphasis was on human rights issues and strengthening lateral linkages: making it a platform.

On October 22 to 23, 2023, we exhibited at the "Exchange Festa" organized by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and the Japan Federation of Consumer Organizations, in which Shufuren is one of the members, and promoted MEL by holding a mini-seminar on the stage and dispatching ambassadors. The event was held at the West Entrance Square of JR

Shinjuku Station and opened to an unspecified number of passers-by, but I feel that awareness of the eco-label has improved over the past three years compared to when the event was held before the coronavirus. This is a steady activity, but we believe it is important as a point of contact in order for people to see the eco-label as their own.



左：MELアンバサダーhitomi.tokyo.happylyfeさんの投稿

Left: Post of Instagram by MEL ambassador hitomi.tokyo.happylyfe

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EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT

It has been announced that the number of foreign visitors to Japan from July to September this year has almost recovered to pre-corona levels. Moreover, the amount of consumption is at an all-time high, and I hope that this will lead to an increase in the consumption of seafood, although I am sure it will be affected by the exchange rate. Starting with this month's issue, MEL News has used the header decorations to introduce certified products instead of certified fish that have come a full circle. Top batters are featured in the CO-OP Sustainable brand of Shirasu, a hot-selling product of the JCCF. We will make monthly introductions, so please do not hesitate to contact the MEL Secretariat if you have any requests.

It's a season with extreme temperature differences. There is also talk of a flu epidemic, so please take care of yourself.

Marine Eco-Label Japan Council Secretariats

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