



Dec 30th 2023

Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

MEL NEWS VOL. 69 (ENGLISH EDITION)

Dear MEL Partners:

In human history, global warming that began 120,000 years ago melted the glaciers that covered the Eurasian continent, causing Homo sapiens, the ancestors of modern humans, to leave Africa and migrate to other places. It has been the hottest year in 120,000 years, and the year 2023, when the UN Secretary-General called it a "boiling earth," is coming to an end.

From time to time, it has been reported that the Cop 28 was held in Dubai, UAE, and in the midst of conflict between developed and developing countries, as well as between oil producing and consuming countries, the session was extended and a concluding document was agreed, barely described as "the beginning of the end of the fossil fuel era." The media's position is that it is groundbreaking, but the rise in temperature and water temperature is inevitable, and we have to be prepared for the difficult road to survival for the fisheries industry, which deals with nature.

1. Status of MEL Certification

The number of new certified entities this month will be two for Aquaculture and two for CoC. As of the end of 2023, there were 237 certifications, including 23 for fisheries, 65 for aquaculture, and 149 for CoC.

On December 20, The Marine Ecology Research Institute (MERI) was recognized by the Japan Accrediation Board (JAB) as a MEL certification body. I would like to express my respect for the

efforts that have been made to overcome the transition to the new GSSI standard for the past three years since this initiative started, and I look forward to active works in cooperation with Japan Fisheries Resource Conservation Association.

I would like to express my heartfelt congratulations to the President Hoshina and their stake holders involved.

2. Voice from Certified Entities Aiming to Develop Value-Added Products

**Yasunori Shimada,
Senior Managing Director of Sunrise Farm Co., Ltd.**

In March 2023, our company began processing our yellowtail at Sukumo processing plant in Sukumo City, Kochi Prefecture. We are simultaneously

processing our main line of fresh fillets and developing products for higher processing, which we had planned from the beginning.



▲サンライズファームの養殖場
MEL ロゴ付き高次加工商品（ブリ大根）▶



▲Aquaculture farm of Sunrise Farm Co. Ltd.

MELcertified higher processing products with logomark (simmered yellowtail with daikon radish)▶

We make Frozen processed products from Ike-jime yellowtail, slice cut, seasoned, heated, etc. easy and delicious to eat.

"Buri daikon"(simmered yellowtail with daikon radish) is cooked together with bite sized cut yellowtail and domestic daikon radish. This is an excellent dish that goes well with the right amount of fat and the flavor of daikon radish. It can be cooked in hot water with frozen pack. The "Sesame Sauce Pickled

yellowtail for Rice Bowl" is thinly sliced yellowtail with a special slicer mixed with a sweet sesame sauce of an individual meal pack. Just defrost it and serve it on hot rice to make an authentic yellowtail rice bowl.

For the new product, we developed "Yellowtail and Avocado Poki." Dice-cut yellowtail and avocado are mixed with sesame oil flavorful sauce. It is popular among women, you can eat as it is or served over rice as a rice bowl. This is

easy to eat, you defrost and eat immediately.

In addition to safety and security, we intend to raise the awareness of our employees and convey our corporate philosophy to our customers by introducing a series of MEL certified products.

3. Column

The Future of Marine Ecolabel from the Southernmost Town of Ehime Prefecture, Ainan Town

In recent years, it has been said that fish stocks are depleted regardless of the type of fish, and I feel that the need for farmed fish is increasing year by year. We want to be a company that contributes to society by continuing sustainable aquaculture and delivering safe and secure products.

Takahiro Hamabe, General Manager of Umigyo Promotion Office, Fisheries Division, Ainan Town Office



浜辺 隆博 様

Mr. Takahiro Hamabe

The town of Ainan, located at the southernmost tip of Ehime Prefecture on the border with Kochi Prefecture, is one of Japan's premier fishing bases as well as nice and calm area, benefiting from the warm Kuroshio

Current and with its complex Lias-style coastline.

Starting with skipjack tuna, which boasts the highest catch in Shikoku, various fisheries and aquaculture businesses are operated in various bays in the town, including fish farming such as red sea bream, yellowtail, striped jack, chub mackerel, and mackerel tuna, and shellfish farming such as pearl oyster, oyster, and brown mussel.

In March of this year, it was the only place in the Chugoku and Shikoku regions to be selected as a model district for the marine industry promoted by the Fisheries Agency.

As an example of recent efforts, the Ainan Fisheries Cooperative, one of the two fishing cooperatives in the town, is exporting farmed red sea bream by trading it. In addition to marine eco-label certification, we aim at achieving

the SDGs are being implemented, including blue carbon initiatives such as seagrass bed conservation, and trials of recycling waste floats from aquaculture farms. We are working to challenge the world by promoting various environmental initiatives under the name of sustainability as new added value.

In February 2020, the Ainan Fisheries Cooperative obtained MEL certification for 7 red sea bream aquaculture companies in the town. I heard that it was a smooth transition audits because

they were working on the aquaculture eco-label (AEL), which was our predecessor, with the aim of providing ingredients for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. Leveraging this experience, some aquaculture operators and local processors also obtained Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP) certification in March of this year, which is the procurement standard for major North American retailers. In addition, it is considered to obtain ASC certification, and it is said that "it can be obtained immediately."



愛南町外泊地区「未来に残したい漁業漁村の歴史文化財産百選」

Sotodomari area of Ainan town is one of a 100 Historic Cultural Properties of Fishing and Fishing Villages to be Preserved in the Future.

Moving on to the scene, the red sea bream aquaculture businesses in the town are operated by families, but there are also relatively many businesses that operate corporately. The fishery ecolabel certification has the cause of visualizing

sustainable initiatives, but the perspective of hiring the employees at hand is essential, and the motivation of management to obtain certification is whether it will lead to the company's profit. The most obvious indicator is the

expansion of transactions.

Indeed, some companies are making upfront investments in anticipation of the recent rise in environmental awareness, but the question that is asked almost always by the companies interested in marine ecolabel is the breadth of their sales channels, "What certifications will bring us the new businesses?" Now that MEL certification has become a de facto standard in Japan, it is necessary for not only aquaculture products but also scheme owners of each certification to consider certification as a product, and to think about switching from product out to market in. If we can provide options to the field side, we believe that it will also help to promote the acquisition of certification. In this regard, the field is taking seriously the stricter use of moist pellets, especially the prohibition of continuous use during the growing season, which was introduced for MEL certification in response to the GSSI benchmark tool Ver2. There is no doubt that they are users of the common global environment of the sea, but also a manager who produces a product called red sea bream, and there is a customer for the quality that has been achieved by the production method that they have continued. It is an extraordinary business decision to change the feed. Up until now, only a few initiatives have started to obtain MEL certification. In particular, regarding fish production methods, it has led to a sense of pride to be recognized as an environmentally friendly approach. I feel that respect for

producers is more important.

In addition, South Ehime Fisheries Research Center of Ehime University, located in the town of Ainan, conducts water quality tests once a week (once every 2 weeks in winter) on 10 sites in the town's waters. In addition, the town office has a system of 2 fish health inspectors who perform fish disease diagnosis from Monday to Saturday (Friday in winter) and provide medical records on the same day. If this type of monitoring is carried out, the concern about the deterioration of the marine environment behind the new benchmark tool can be dispelled. I would like all experts from both Japan and overseas to come and see the site.

I am a newly minted Ainan Town employee who just arrived in April on secondment from the Fisheries Agency. I was in charge of the marine eco-label when I was at the Fisheries Agency. When the phrase "marine eco-label" was first included in the Basic Plan for Fisheries in 2017, I remember that the idea was to join the international standard of the marine eco-label certification scheme that originated in Japan, with the ambitious meaning of "making the world recognize the Japanese-style production and management methods that we can be proud of." I have helped to achieve the major goal of sustaining Japan's fisheries and aquaculture industry. I think Ainan town is a perfect place for that. I hope that we will work together with you to realize the future that the marine eco-label will lead and the sustainable use of fishery

resources.

4. MEL Compound Feed Certification Standard and Fish Meal - Fish Oil Certification Standard committee

The second MEL Compound Feed, Fish Meal and Fish Oil Standards Committee meeting was held on December 19, both in person and on the web. The discussion focused on the explanation of each requirement component, which constitutes the four principles of the standard, and how to incorporate the concept of mass balance into the standard to ensure the sustainability and traceability of raw materials derived from marine fish. We received active comments from members and observers, which clarified where the issues were.

mass balance into the MEL standard, specific issues will be investigated in the preceding industries such as palm oil.

3. Scrutinize the actual conditions of raw materials classified into " [which is not qualified as IUU and does not include endangered species" cannot be guaranteed.]

4. Documents concerning catch certification may be in any form as long as the necessary information is specified.

5. Since the adjusted fish meal cannot be ignored, how it is reflected in the standard should be considered.

1. It is important for this certification system that aquaculture companies can label products (farmed fish).

From the beginning of this year, we will further evolve the draft with the help of the committee members. Thank you to all of them.

2. In order to incorporate the concept of

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EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT

"2023, the year of Chaos" is just around the corner. It is heartbreaking that some countries cannot celebrate Christmas at the end of the year because of the war. It was not a good year for the seafood industry either, but I think it was a year in which we faced various challenges that will lead us to tomorrow under difficult circumstances. It has been reported that the words of Jackie Robinson, the first black major league player, "The opposite of the impossible is not possible. It's a challenge." were taken up during Shohei Ohtani fever in America. (Coincidentally, it was the Dodgers in New York that made Jackie Robinson's big league debut.). We hope that we will be ready for the new year without being too eager to challenge ourselves.

Please take care and have a good year.

MEL Certified Products of the month: Japanese oyster

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