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Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

## **MEL NEWS VOL. 71 (ENGLISH EDITION)**

Dear MEL Partners:

*February is coming to an end with all the noise in the world. In addition to the difficult business environment, I am sure you have been busy with financial results and personnel matters.*

*The MEL Council was also in full swing, with events such as the JAB Certification Ceremony for the certification body, The Marine Ecology Research Institute (MERI), the Standards Setting Committee for MEL Certification Standards Review, MEL CPD Training for experienced auditors, the Seafood Show Osaka, the MEL Certification Ceremony, and the MEL Advisory Board.*

*The Secretariat is working hard for the new fiscal year.*

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

*No new certified entities this month.*

*As for the aquaculture certification Ver. 2.0, a total of 24 cases were newly acquired and updated from Ver. 1.0, and the transition to the new standard is progressing.*

### **2.Voice from Certified Entities**

***"Aiming for a Rich Ocean ..."***

***Katsuhiko Maeda***

***President of Settsu Boat Seine Net Fishery Council***

*"In the future, we should not only capture the fish, but also consider how to operate the fishery in consideration of resources. In order to do that, why don't we get the certification of marine*

*eco-label?" Our efforts to obtain MEL certification started from the opinions of fishermen who are members of our council.*



*Photo: Katsuhiko Maeda  
President of Settsu Boat Seine Net  
Fishery Council*

*We, Settsu Boat Seine Net Fishery Council, are composed of 26 trawl fishermen from the Seto Inland Sea that belong to two cooperatives, the Kobe City Fisheries Cooperative Association in Kobe City, Hyogo Prefecture and the Hyogo Fisheries Cooperative Association. The main fishing ground is Osaka Bay, and fishing rules such as the timing and hours of fishing are determined in consultation with the boat seine net fishers other area in Osaka and Awaji who share the fishing area. Under these circumstances, we have always shared information with fishermen in other areas, such as cancelling fishing for a certain period of time when the catch is low, hastening the net lifting time to avoid overfishing*

*when there is a good catch, and regulating mesh size, and have been operating in response to changing conditions every day. By co-management and self-regulating by the fishermen, and by establishing fishing close days, we have been working to protect the resources toward the sustainable fishery.*

*In addition, the Kobe City Fisheries Cooperative Association, to which we belong, owns a fish processing plant in the fishing port, and the association itself conducts high-order processing such as kamaage and chirimen, as well as chirimen tsukudani. They participate in bids run by the association, buy MEL-certified fish caught by fishermen, and immediately process and manufacture them. This factory also has MEL CoC certification. In addition to our efforts as fishers, we also have a consistent system for fishing, processing, manufacturing, and sales.*

*Through MEL certification, we as fishermen will continue to engage in fisheries that take resource management into consideration, and the fishery association will provide safe and secure marine products to our customers. We would like to work closely with fishermen and fisheries cooperatives to find a sustainable future for fisheries, both in terms of raw materials and sales.*

### 3.Column

#### "Looking back my career"

**Akiyo Matono**

**Executive advisor of Nissui Co., Ltd.**

*Three years have passed since I left my career. I reached my 70th birthday at the end of last year, and almost every day is a Sunday. I have more than enough time, so I look back on my 45 years of career.*



Mr. Akiyo Matono

Executive Advisor of Nissui Co., Ltd.

*I was an expat in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada from 1979 to 1984. Four large trawlers of the Company's vessels operated in the summer (Note 2) in the NAFO (Note 1) waters off Halifax. They caught Northern shortfin flying squid (pine squid) and smelt there. In the winter, it was sometimes a cooperative operation, catching Atlantic cod, so it was my job to attend the company ship.*

*Another job was to produce products for the Japanese market from fish processing plants scattered along the east coast of Canada from April to November, when the sea closed. Smelt and pine squid in Newfoundland were already commercialized for Japan. In addition, we developed Atlantic herring, herring roe, which are valued as ingredients for seasoned herring roe, and snow crab, in four continental provinces. Snow crab still occupies a large position in the Japanese market. On the other hand, regarding the stocks in the northwestern Atlantic Ocean, the situation is regrettable as the Atlantic cod has been greatly reduced due to overfishing and the pine squid probably due to changes in the temperature of the spawning ground.*

*I was also an expat in Seattle from 1989 to 1996. In Dutch Harbor, Alaska, there is a factory that produces pollock mince and fillet. Our mission was to create a network that would enable us to sell products from our factories worldwide. At the beginning of the stay, the amount of resources of pollock exceeded the fishing effort. The plant operated at full capacity for 10 months a year, excluding the maintenance period. However, the amount of effort*

*gradually increased, and resource management became important. The government decided on the catch by conducting research, analysis and evaluation of the stock. On the other hand, we have developed and continue to construct a worldwide network in Japan, the United States, Korea, Taiwan, China, Singapore, Malaysia, France, Spain and Russia.*

*After that, I became a manager and left the practical business, but deeply involved in aquaculture and fishing business in Japan. I thought the future of the aquaculture business was very bright. The reasons are as follows:*

- Japanese recognizes the value of raw fish for sashimi.*

#### **4. MERI was awarded a JAB certificate.**

*On December 20th last year, the Marine Ecology Research Institute (MERI), which is running as a MEL certification body, was granted JAB accreditation as a product certification body, and the accreditation ceremony was held on February 1. This is the second ceremony for awarding JAB accreditation to MEL certification body since Japan Fisheries Resource Conservation Association (JFRCA) in April 2019.*

*It was a grand award ceremony attended by JAB (Japan Accreditation Board), President Iizuka, Senior Managing Director Moriuchi and other staff members in charge of the project, and*

- Japan is a suitable place for aquaculture and fishing*

*Japan has the sixth largest exclusive economic zone in the world. It is the intersection of warm current and cold current. This is because it has a long and complex coastline of 3000 km from north to south, suitable for aquaculture. Under such favorable circumstances, we expect the next generation of young people to develop sustainable large-scale and competitive aquaculture and fishing businesses.*

*(Note 1) NORTHWEST ATLANTIC FISHERIES ORGANIZATION*

*(Note 2) Catch limits agreed between the governments of Canada and Japan*

*MERI, President Hoshina, Director Watanabe and others related to the certification project. I would like to express my heartfelt congratulations to MERI for the achievement of its patient efforts over the past three years and for the inspiring moment for all those in charge. In addition, we are pleased to announce that the MEL Council, which is the owner of the scheme, has been able to realize a challenge, which is the realization of multiple internationally accredited certification bodies, which will further increase the credibility of the scheme in terms of international standardization.*

*MERI has already reviewed and certified two aquaculture cases and three CoC cases, and the certification business has been positioned as a team within the*

*organization, and we would like to greatly expect your success in the future.*



*JAB accreditation ceremony*

### **5. Standards setting committee**

*In line with the "review of standards at least once every five years" stipulated in the MEL Management and Administration Regulations, which is one of the important issues for this fiscal year, standards setting committees for the review were held in aquaculture (January 29), fisheries and CoC (February 6). From now on, we will seek opinions from stakeholders, and*

*we hope to receive approval for fisheries and aquaculture at the ordinary general meeting in June. Also, the CoC will be thoroughly reviewed and elaborated by a working group of experts in order to make the standard more suitable for the actual situation of distribution and processing in Japan.*

### **6. MEL CPD training**

*The second MEL CPD training was held online via Zoom from February 13 to 14.*

*About half of the participants were new to Zoom, but lectures went smooth,*

including the group case study. There were 15 participants (including 1 observer). The age structure of the participants was five in their seventies, five in their sixties, two in their fifties, and two in their forties. The auditors' response to the new age of seafood eco-labels,

### **7. Seafood Show Osaka**

Seafood Show Osaka was held from February 21 to 22 at ATC Hall. The number of exhibitors was 230 companies and organizations, and the number of visitors was 9700, returning to pre-COVID-19 levels. At the venue, the "Seafood Eco-Label Corner" was set up, and new exhibitors were RIKEN FOOD Co., Ltd., which obtained MEL certification for land-based cultivation of Green Laver and Marui Shoten Co., Ltd. (Shirasu Higher Processing), which is the first certification body of MERI. In addition, a total of 33

including the training of successors, is recovering from the delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. We will continue to work to maintain and improve the quality of the audits through the training. We would like to ask for your cooperation.

products with the MEL logo were exhibited by 18 companies and organizations in the MEL certified seafood exhibition corner, which was well received by visitors.

At this seafood show, I strongly felt the growing desire to enter into land-based aquaculture, from industries that have nothing to do with fisheries. This move can be regarded as a kind of boom, but understanding the difficulty of keeping living creatures is essential, so I will keep my eyes on the future.



**Left: MEL booth    Right: school student at MEL**

### **8. MEL certification ceremony**

The 12th MEL Certification Ceremony was held at the Seafood Show Osaka. This was the first time that the ceremony was held

jointly by JFRCA and MERI. Chairperson Takahashi and Chairperson Hoshina attended the meeting, and it was an

*appropriate event for the new system in which multiple certification bodies are established. Certificates were awarded to 15 companies and organizations from all over the country, and each representative expressed strong determination. As a scheme owner, I would like to express my sincere congratulations to those who have been awarded the certificate. In addition, as a scheme owner, I was pleased to hear the thoughts expressed in your determination, and specifically, (1) that you are working very seriously and steadily, (2) that you took the challenge because you felt it was necessary for your own sake, although you were told by your customers in the beginning, and (3) that*

*you would like to extend the certification to local communities and business partners without limiting it to yourself. In fact, the announcement that it led to actions such as the collection of floating garbage at the port as part of the acquisition of the certification resonated with me. In addition to the participation of top management themselves, the attendance of young people in charge of practical work was seen as a sign that MEL is helping people in their businesses. In the future, we will work with you to establish a Japanese model for the seafood eco-label and share it with the world.*



**Certification Ceremony**

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**EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT**

*With the coronavirus and flu spreading quietly, the first spring storm was declared on February 15 in Kanto. And the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) says the average global temperature in January was the highest on record. This year is going to be another year to keep an eye on climate change.*

*The Nikkei Stock Average reached its highest level in 34 years at the close of February 22. Only shortly after it was reported that Japan's GDP fell to fourth place in the world, overtaken by Germany, why? In its morning edition on the 23rd, the Nikkei newspaper wrote, "It is no longer 'post-bubble,'" following the line "No longer 'post-war'" in the conclusion of the White Paper on Economic Affairs of 1956. I hope that we will take this opportunity to break away from the "shrinking mindset" that has dominated Japan for more than 30 years.*

*MEL Certified Products of the month: Frozen pack of yellowtail simmered with daikon*

*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](mailto:info@melj.jp)*