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Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

## **MEL NEWS VOL. 70 (ENGLISH EDITION)**

Dear MEL Partners:

Happy New Year everyone.

Starting from the aim of "advancing to Japanese revival" from the lost thirty years, the year of Kinoe-Tatsu also took a hit with a bang on New Year's Day, which straightened the mind that was leaning forward.

There are no words for the tragic situation that has become a reality as the days have passed since the Noto Peninsula earthquake. However, I would like to pray for the souls of those who lost their lives and for the return of normalcy to those affected as soon as possible. Two companies and two organizations have acquired MEL certification in the four prefectures of Hokuriku: Wajima Fishery Producers Association, Shinminato Fishery Cooperative Association, Ishikawa Chuo Uoichi Corporation and Yamatsu Suisan Co., Ltd. I hear that they all have a BCP (Business Continuity Plan) and I hope that they will return to normal operations as soon as they can.

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

The number of new certified entities this month will be one for Fisheries, two for Aquaculture and four for CoC. As of the end of 2023, there were 237 certifications, including 23 for fisheries, 65 for aquaculture, and 149 for CoC. As a special note, Hicho Co., Ltd. of Tuna intermediate wholesaler of Toyosu Market was certified.

This is the third company of Toyosu's intermediate wholesaler to obtain certification. At "Yume Ichi" in Toyosu Market, which was hosted by Wholesales Co-operative of Tokyo Fish Market, MEL-certified Atlantic bluefin tuna from Usufuku Honten Co., Ltd. in Kesenuma was sold for a block processed by Hicho Co., Ltd with MEL logo.



(株) 樋長 飯田統一郎社長

MELロゴ付き冊

*Left: President Iida of Hicho Co., Ltd. Right: A block of Atlantic bluefin tuna with MEL logo*

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

***"What we hope for the system as producer certification"***

***Kiyoko Tokuhira,***

***Senior Managing Director, Taichi Inc.***

*In the summer of 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, we decided to obtain MEL based on the belief that the global trend of SDGs would accelerate. We were able to obtain MEL certification in June 2021. It has been two years since we acquired the*

*product, but our biggest concern is whether the V2 standard will be able to maintain the current "delicious" taste.*

*However, I also ask myself if I quit, will it keep the time and energy to reobtain.*



(株)タイチ 徳弘多一郎社長と拘りが詰まった「鯛一郎くん」

*Taichiro Tokuhiko, president of Taichi Inc. with "Taichiro-kun"*

*Shortly before the acquisition of MEL certification, since March 2021, all employees have been engaged in activities to pick up garbage from the sea on the first Saturday afternoon of each month. Now, nearby business owners and students are participating, and Uwajima city hall official is*

*cooperating with us. After entering some of the activities, I was selected as one of the Ministry of the Environment's "100 Best Practical ESD Videos" and was able to get it posted on the Ministry of the Environment's YouTube video. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hezWCGqzflE>)*



地域の皆様と一緒にいる藻場再生活動

*Photo: Seaweed bed restoration activities with the people in their area*

*And what I feel in sales these days is that, unlike in the past, customers are gradually becoming more concerned about MEL certification and the certification scheme. I can't say that we are selected only by certification, but I feel that certification is one of the items to be selected. So this time, we decided to get re-certified under V1 before moving to V2. From now on, we will try to find out how we can continue. Because the SDGs have become an essential part of compulsory education,*

*and I'm surprised that our company is also getting more requests for children to speak about it and visit us. If these children are expected to enter society in the next 10 years, become consumers, and drive the economy, they will not select us unless we make efforts to contribute to the SDGs. Because I feel that the business will not be viable as a result.*

*It's the hardest to keep the things continueing for a long time. I'll try it a little harder.*

### **3.Column**

#### **"Looking forward to further development of MEL"**

**Toshiro Shirasu**

**Advisor of Japan Fisheries Association**

*It has been almost half a year since I resigned as the president of Japan Fisheries Association, and a new year began. In the meantime, I am well aware and encouraged that MEL or the MEL Council continues to move forward and improve.*

*As for recent topics, first, as you might all know, in September of last year, we completed the renewed recognition by reviewing the standards in response to the revision of the benchmark tools of GSSI, and continued to receive approval. Second, the development of standards related to the production and distribution of feed, fish meal, and fish oil, which we had been advocating for a long time, progressed, and the basic plan was finalized at the end of last year. Third, the realization of multiple certification bodies, which had been our aspiration since our establishment, was completed in December of last year.*

*The first about recognition by GSSI is the second after RFM in Alaska, ahead of the previous famous schemes such as MSC and ASC. Although I guess it is due to various circumstances, it is a result of the efforts of MEL, and it feels like a world away compared to the first recognition in 2019 which was the ninth.*

*I was able to report on this at the General Conference of the International Federation of Fisheries Organizations (ICFA), which I have been working on since I was president, and have reported on the progress of MEL's activities since its creation in Rome last October as vice president representing Asia. At that time, I explained that MEL is a Marine eco-label suitable for Asia with a small-scale and various species fisheries, and the response of the Taiwanese delegation was to agree with me.*



ICFAハビエル会長（当時）とにこやかに握手する  
白須会長（当時）

*The second about the development of new standard for aquaculture feed, it took quite a long time to prepare it, and I assume that there was a lot of difficulties. However, the fact that the basic drafts were prepared and the standards committee was held, with the cooperation of various parties, is evidence that the process was well followed, and we are making steady progress.*

*The third, the Marine Ecology Research Institute (MERI) was accredited by the Japan Accreditation Board (JAB) as a certification body for MEL aquaculture and CoC certification, since the MEL aquaculture standards was revised after the MERI applied for certification, part of the JAB's review had to be redone, and it took them three years since MERI responded to the call from MEL. I would like to express my gratitude and joy to each of you more than I do.*

*I would like to reiterate my respect for President Kakizoe's ambition and leadership, and for the continuous efforts of the MEL Council and the people concerned.*

*For the new fiscal year, Chairperson Edamoto of Japan Fisheries Association said that it would carry on its previous policy, including structural reform of fishing vessel fisheries and expansion of demand, including exports, while promoting resource management. On the other hand, the key words of the association are smart fishery industry, decarbonization, improvement of working environment, utilization of women and young people, and finally, fishery industry, which is chosen by young people. These are all matters related to the objectives and requirements of MEL and other fishery eco-labels, and it is expected that they will soon become a matter of course and a given concept not only to the industry but also to the general public.*

*In the same way, Ito-Yokado started to sell marine products with MEL marks around the year before last, and a co-op near my parents' house is also selling them, and a new large supermarket is expected to be certified.*

*At some point in the future, the spread will accelerate, and it is expected to be seen in stores everywhere.*

*I hope that Japan Fisheries Association will continue to support MEL, as well as MEL keep improving, and soon become a*

public organ of society.

As a last note, many people in fisheries industry were also affected by the Noto Peninsula earthquake, and fishing vessels and port facilities were also damaged. It vividly reminds me of the Great East Japan Earthquake, where I strived my duty to the

full risked my job to support reconstruction. I would like to borrow here to express my sympathies and pray for a speedy recovery and reconstruction.

#### 4. Events

We exhibited at the "Fish Day" event (January 15 to 19) held at the Consumer's Room on the first floor of the North Annex of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. It was well received mainly in the daytime by visitors and students,

including those working for the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. The participants of the event were the Fisheries Agency, National Federation of Fisheries Co-operative Associations, the Fish Food Promotion Center and MEL.



「消費者の部屋」のMEL展示

MEL display in "Consumer's room"

We exhibited at the Fish -1 Grand Prix held at Ikebukuro Nishiguchi Park on the 21st. Since Hibiya Park is undergoing

renovation work, the venue was changed, but the exhibition related to MEL and the MEL briefing for children were held at the

corner of the booth of the Fisheries Agency's "Sakana no hi," and it was very successful despite the rainy weather.



Fish-1グランプリ会場でお子様を対象としたMEL説明会  
説明しているのは協議会事務局の小林および遠藤です。子供さんたちへの働きかけを大切にしています。

#### *MEL workshop at Fish-1 Grand Prix*

*Those who explained to children is our staff, Kobayashi and Endo. We take a time to encourage them.*

#### **5. New members**

*Ajinomoto Co., Ltd has joined in December last year. Members from the food industry include Ajinomoto, Kikkoman and Kewpie, and the domestic support base for "MEL from Japan, recognized by the world" is*

*expanding further. We keep aiming to raise awareness both domestic and international, become more helpful to the society with your support.*

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#### **EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT**

*On January 8, the morning edition of Coming of Age Day featured a powerful three-page opinion ad from NIPPON FOOD SHIFT, which emphasizes the importance of food to young*



*people as they celebrate their coming of age ceremony from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.*

*([https://nippon-food-shift.maff.go.jp/assets/pdf/nfs\\_nikkeikiji2212.pdf](https://nippon-food-shift.maff.go.jp/assets/pdf/nfs_nikkeikiji2212.pdf))*

*I salute the positive actions of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries at a time when no action can be taken without a device.*

*This year, which is said to be a "turning point in our strategy," advertisements that appeal to customers rather than goods through the media will stand out from the new year. MEL's activities are in line with the era of appealing to people, and we will do our best to contribute to all of you. At the same time, our website has been updated, so we hope you will take a look at it.*

*MEL Certified Products of the month: Surf clam*

*Marine Eco-Label Japan Council Secretariats*

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