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Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

## **MEL NEWS VOL. 72 (ENGLISH EDITION)**

Dear MEL Partners:

*It has been three months since the Noto Peninsula earthquake. It has been reported on a daily basis that efforts are being made to revive strong businesses and restore infrastructure in line with the inconvenient lives of many people. Against this backdrop, it is heart-wrenching to realize that the fishing industry, which tends to lag behind, has been unable to move at all, especially at Wajima Harbor due to the rising sea floor. We ask ourselves what MEL can do.*

*Thanks to you, it has been 6 years since MEL News was first published in April 2018. At the Advisory Board meeting held on February 27, it was pointed out that "MEL" and "Marine Eco-Label Japan" look like two different organizations for those who are not familiar with. We take this opportunity to highlight "MEL" and "MEL Council," which we used as abbreviations. Of course, the official name is Marine Eco-Label Japan, and the organization name remains Marine Eco-Label Japan Council. It will take time, but we will work hard to ensure that the name "MEL" will spread throughout society. Please keep supporting for "MEL."*

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

*No new certified entities this month.*

*At the end of this fiscal year, the number of certifications is expected to be 243, including 24 for fisheries, 64 for aquaculture, and 155 for CoC.*

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

### **Coho salmon farming and MEL in Ajishima**

**Toshikazu Abe,**

**Executive Committee Member, Ajishima Branch, Miyagi Fishery Cooperative**

*Ajishima is a remote island located at the tip of the Oga Peninsula in Miyagi Prefecture.*

*Coho salmon farming, the first fish farming on the island, began in 1982 and is currently operated by 4 management organizations.*

*The aquaculture is conducted in the aqueduct between Oga Peninsula and Ajishima Island, where the tide is fast and the sea waves are easily affected. This is a difficult place for fish farming, but we pride ourselves on the fact that this makes the coho salmon firm and good quality.*

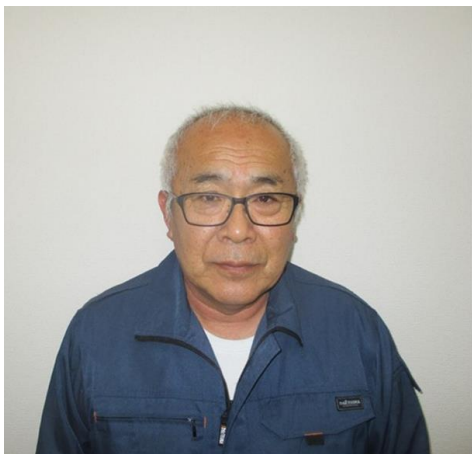
*In 1996, in order to stabilize our business, we began trading with MARUICHI Co., Ltd., and through the negotiated trading, we listed our products in Ito-Yokado's "A fish which the producer's face is visible" series and worked to increase added value.*

*Around 2019, Ito Yokado told us about*

*acquiring MEL certification in order to strengthen the brand strength of "A fish which the producer's face is visible" series. After about 2 years of preparation, 2 business entities that had been engaged in relative transactions were able to acquire MEL aquaculture certification in May 2021. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the MEL staff for their kind and courteous guidance during this time.*

*At present, we have obtained MEL certification from aquaculture producers, processing plants, and retail stores, and are working to strengthen our sales and brand capabilities.*

*Fish farming is in a very difficult situation as feed prices continue to soar, but we hope to overcome this difficult situation by formulating a sales strategy using MEL certification in cooperation with the relevant parties.*



**Toshikazu Abe**



**Sorting operation at fish farm**

**Mr.**

### **3.Column**

**Origin 12 years ago**

**Minako Iue**

**President of Sailors For the Sea Japan Branch**



**Minako Iue**

**President of Sailors For the Sea Japan Branch**

*If I recall, it is the fall of 2012, when David Rockefeller Jr., the head of the Rockefeller family and an old friend of mine who is like an American family to me, and his wife, and three of us were touring Naritasan Shinshoji Temple in Chiba Prefecture. Mt. Narita is deeply connected to fish market, so fish motifs are enshrined here and there in the temple grounds.*

*The approach way is lined with traditional eel restaurants. David, who founded the marine environment NGO Sailors for the Sea as a sailing player representing the*

*United States, said, "The Japanese worship fish with such importance, and even though Japanese fish is delicious, fishery resources are drastically decreasing. Bluefin tuna will soon become an endangered species. Sustainable consumption is important." And took a small, folded, tattered Seafood Watch pocket guide from his pocket wallet. This is my first list of fish. I was told, "In the United States, there is a rating program that informs about the sustainability of seafood. As you can see, the three colors of traffic lights are blue, yellow, and red. Blue = sustainable and recommended, yellow = alternative, and red = don't eat it now. The colors show the message."*

*It all started when I said, "Let's create a program like this in Japan and send a message so that everyone can enjoy seafood for a long time."*

*It was in the fall of the following year, 2013, that the Blue Seafood Guide, the first seafood rating program in Japan, was born. Since then, it has been reformed, and now, in addition to the national edition, it also publishes regional editions produced in cooperation with local governments such as Tokyo and Hiroshima Prefecture. We are also*

*promoting sustainable seafood to a wider audience by sharing the BBB = Blue Seafood Beauty Book on the web, combining sustainable seafood with beauty and health. This initiative received a commendation from the Agency for Cultural Affairs as "Utilization of Knowledge." It was also introduced as an advanced example in the United Nations 10 years of Marine Science. The Blue Seafood Guide was introduced as a program in line with the United Nations guidelines for 2030 that marine science in the future should be more interdisciplinary, transboundary and practical.*

*I vividly remember discovering the existence of MEL while searching around for examples in Japan. Compared to that time, MEL has achieved remarkable progress, and we are very pleased that it has been recognized internationally by GSSI and is spreading to the world.*

*In the Blue Seafood Guide, MSC, ASC and Seafood Watch's Green (recommended) products that meet GSSI's international evaluation criteria are also introduced as blue seafood. Naturally, our company was going to ask for permission to be included in the Blue Seafood Guide once MEL also received GSSI recognition. However, the*

*evaluation of the same fish species did not match. Digging deeper, we found that although the MEL certification program itself was at international level, there were differences in the interpretation of resources when certification assessment is conducted in the field. The certification body is a third-party organization and not the MEL secretariat.*

*However, the good news is about the Marine Ecology Research Institute (MERI) has recently acquired accreditation as a certification body for MEL aquaculture and CoC certification under the Japan Accreditation Board (JAB). I hope that attention will be paid to the sustainability assessment of fishery products thorough reviews carried out more and more in the future.*

*The attached table compares the Blue Seafood Guide, Seafood Watch, MSC, and MEL requirements. Each program has its own set of evaluation criteria, and each has its own set of important evaluation items, which are unique to the program.*

*We hope that users will choose and utilize programs based on their application, and that the synergistic effects of each program's unique activities will enhance the sustainability of fishery resources throughout society.*

The summary of scheme overlap at the element level between BSG, SW, MSC, and MEL					
		Color	Applied	Suspendable*	Not applied
*when data is not available					
Components	Elements	Schemes			
		BSG	SW	MSC	MEL
<b>1 Target Stock Management</b>					
Impact Management	Harvest Control Rules & Management Tools				
	Rebuilding Timeframes				
	Stock Recovery Strategies				
	Setting Catch Limits				
	Harvest Strategy Implementation				
	Harvest Strategy Performance				
	Use of Scientific Advice				
Information	Evidence of Shark Finning				
	Development of HCRs				
	Information to Assess Implementation				
	Review of Alternative Measures				
	Monitoring/Review of Rebuilding Strategies				
		8	10	10	7
<b>2 Non-Target (retained &amp; not-retained) Stock Management</b>					
Impact Management	Strategies & Measures				
	Management Implementation				
	Gear Loss Management				
	Strategy Evaluation				
	Evidence of Shark Finning				
Information	Information to Support Management Strategy				
		5	5	6	3
<b>3 Endangered, Threatened and Protected Species Management</b>					
Impact Management	Strategies & Measures				
	Management Implementation				
	Recovery Strategy				
	Strategy Evaluation				
Information	Information to Support Management Strategy				
		5	5	5	3
<b>4 Habitat Management</b>					
Impact Management	Strategies & Measures				
	Gear-Specific Management				
	Strategy Evaluation				
Information	Information to Support Management Strategy				
		1	3	4	3
<b>5 Ecosystems Management</b>					
Impact Management	Strategies & Measures				
	Spatial Management				
	Gear Loss Management				
	Strategy Evaluation				
Information	Information to Support Management Strategy				
		3	4	4	2
<b>6 Target Stock Status</b>					
Status	Biomass Status				
	Biomass Status (Information-Limited)				
	Fishing Mortality				
	Fishing Mortality (Information-Limited)				
	Low Trophic Level Modifiers				
Information	Status Assessment				
	Stock Assessment Review				
		3	7	6	3
<b>7 Non-Target (retained &amp; not-retained) Stock Status</b>					
Status	Biomass Status				
	Biomass Status (Information-Limited)				
	Fishing Mortality				
	Status Assessment				
Information	Impact Monitoring				
	Life History Information				
		2	5	4	3
<b>8 Endangered, Threatened and Protected Species Status</b>					
Status	Biomass Status				
	Biomass (Information-Limited)				
	Direct Impacts				
	Indirect Impacts				
	National & International Take Limits				
Information	Impact Monitoring				
		4	5	5	1
<b>9 Habitat Status</b>					
Status	Impacts				
	Gear-Specific Impacts				
	Habitat Types and Locations				
Information	Impact Monitoring				
	Impact Assessment				
		3	2	4	2



#### **4. MEL Advisory Board**

The Advisory Board was held on February 27. All six members of the committee were present, and extensive discussions took place running over the specified time. This was also the first time that Ms. Yumi Aoyagi attended as an observer from JAB. I will report part of the discussion.

##### **① The new age of seafood eco-labels**

• The United States (FMI research) shows that there has been a rapid increase in the desire to purchase sustainable seafood since the coronavirus. Generation Z and Millennials are leading the way, but MEL is also becoming more socially acceptable in Japan. In particular, students who excel at universities have a higher sense of sustainability. I want to get these students involved.

• On the other hand, life is hard when you feel like a housewife. The "cheap is good" mentality and purchasing behavior are remarkable.

##### **② For IUU Fishery Index 2023**

• Japan improved 34 places from the previous survey (2021), with a score of 236 (46th worst), almost the same as the United States (232, 63rd worst), and Norway (231, 66th worst).

The above results reflect in some way of the fact that the acquisition of eco-label certification has progressed.

• It should be taken positively, and the IUU index will be further improved if MEL certifications are counted as well as MSC.

##### **③ Respect for Certified Entities**

• It is unavoidable to maintain the standards required by the GSSI, but certain considerations should be taken.

• Is it OK for trawl fisheries having zero certification?

##### **④ About Public Relations Activities**

• At present, Marine Eco-Label Japan and MEL are used together, but for those who are not familiar with them, they do not seem to be the same. Why not just push it out with MEL?

• It is necessary to encourage to be included in the elementary school textbooks.

• The eco-bags are very effective as a campaign tool. Why don't we use it more?

##### **⑤ Other**

• As MEL certification expands, it is important to keep in mind the value of MEL.

• Contamination by PFAS compound is not considered to be in the standard, but cannot be ignored due to safety issues.

• Although the number of certification terminations has tended to increase, we would like to discuss requirements concerning stock assessments and the use of moist pellets with relevant parties.

The valuable opinions of the committee members in various aspects of MEL operations. Thank you to all the committee members.

**5. MEL certified seafood fair was held at Afu Shokudo, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.**

From March 4 to 8, a fair was held at Afu Shokudo using MEL certified fish to "connect the sea, fish and fish-eating culture" under the initiative of Sanko Marketing Foods Co., Ltd., the trustee of the cafeteria. At the same time, it was

held in the cafeterias of Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Justice. However, both cafeterias are not open to the public, so only the people working there are eligible.

▼Menu

メニュー Menu	価格Price (税込)	3月4日 月 MON	3月5日 火 TUE	3月6日 水 WED	3月7日 木 THU	3月8日 金 FRI
スペシャル定食 小鉢2つ・汁付	¥1,200	<b>限定20食</b> <b>広島県産カキフライ定食</b> 846 kcal 自給率 59% 蛋白質 24.5 g 塩分 4.9 g 脂質 37.9 g				
<b>日替MEL</b> <b>あふ魚定食</b> 小鉢2つ・汁物付	<b>特別価格</b> <b>¥1,000</b> <b>数量限定</b>	<b>北海道産</b> <b>真ホックと根菜の</b> <b>焼き浸し定食</b> 自給率 97% 663kcal 塩分4.4g 蛋白質36.8g 脂質19.8g	<b>静岡県産</b> <b>一本釣りとろカツオ定食</b> <b>～おろし塩ポン酢～</b> 自給率 98% 545 kcal 塩分 3.3 g 蛋白質 31.7 g 脂質 8.8 g	<b>静岡県産</b> <b>炙りビンチョウマグロ定食</b> <b>～アボカド山葵ソース～</b> 自給率 77% 685 kcal 塩分 3.1 g 蛋白質 33.4 g 脂質 26.4 g	<b>福島県産</b> <b>塩サバのカレー揚げ定食</b> <b>～フレッシュトマトソース～</b> 自給率 70% 935 kcal 塩分 2.5 g 蛋白質 33.8 g 脂質 40.2 g	<b>北海道産</b> <b>ニシンの刺身定食</b> <b>～焼製生薑醤油～</b> 自給率 96% 660 kcal 塩分 4.0 g 蛋白質 31.1 g 脂質 23.9 g
日替定食 小鉢1つ・汁物付	¥880	<b>豚ロース肉の</b> <b>黒七味焼き定食</b> 自給率 55% 724kcal 塩分2.8g 蛋白質34.1g 脂質29.3g	<b>鶏もも肉の</b> <b>塩麹焼き定食</b> 自給率 51% 745 kcal 塩分 4.9 g 蛋白質 35.5 g 脂質 25.1 g	<b>牛バラ漬け</b> <b>たれ焼き定食</b> 自給率 42% 936 kcal 塩分 4.7 g 蛋白質 29.7 g 脂質 45.5 g	<b>鶏もも肉の</b> <b>柚子胡椒焼き定食</b> 自給率 55% 731 kcal 塩分 4.4 g 蛋白質 36.1 g 脂質 27.3 g	<b>豚ロース肉の</b> <b>トマトソース定食</b> 自給率 58% 861 kcal 塩分 3.6 g 蛋白質 35.2 g 脂質 37.0 g
日替麺 小鉢1つ付	¥830	<b>豚バラ</b> <b>けんちんうどん</b> 自給率 15% 518kcal 塩分3.9g 蛋白質16.6g 脂質21.5g	<b>柚子香る</b> <b>とろろ蕎麦</b> 自給率 59% 456 kcal 塩分 4.1 g 蛋白質 19.8 g 脂質 10.8 g	<b>春キャベツと生ハムの</b> <b>ペロンチーノパスタ</b> 自給率 10% 723 kcal 塩分 2.4 g 蛋白質 27.1 g 脂質 28.3 g	<b>春の彩り</b> <b>ジェノベーゼパスタ</b> 自給率 33% 588 kcal 塩分 4.4 g 蛋白質 22.6 g 脂質 28.5 g	<b>とんこつラーメン</b> 自給率 14% 760 kcal 塩分 6.8 g 蛋白質 30.3 g 脂質 13.3 g
<b>週替MEL并</b> <b>小鉢1つ・汁物付</b>	<b>特別価格</b> <b>¥1,300</b> <b>数量限定</b>	<b>MEL海鮮丼</b> “千葉県産スズキ、静岡県産カツオ・ビンチョウ、愛知県産釜揚げしらす” 668 kcal 自給率 96% 蛋白質 45.6 g 塩分 3.6 g 脂質 10.4 g				

▼MEL Certified Fish and Suppliers

Sea bass: Kaiko Bussan Co., Ltd.

Bonito and albacore tuna: Takahashi Shoten Co., Ltd.

Boiled juvenile anchovy: Kanesei Co., Ltd.

Atka mackerel and Pacific herring: Marusui Sapporo Chuo Fisheries Co., Ltd.

(Atka mackerel: Rirei Fishery Eco-label Promotion Council)

(Herring: Ishikari Bay Fisheries Cooperative Association)

Mackerel: Fukushima Federation of Fisheries Cooperative Associations



**Left: Long line after 12:00      Others: MEL Certified fish dishes**

*"Afu Shokudo" is open to outsiders, so it was very popular every day. It was a limited number of meals, so I apologize for the inconvenience caused by the lack of items.*

*The MEL Council cooperated in proposing certified fish, decorating the cafeteria,*

*and distributing promotional materials. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to Sanko Marketing Foods and all the food providers who planned this project, as it was the first time for MEL to offer lunches as office catering services.*

## **6. MEL Ambassador meeting**

*On March 12, MEL Ambassadors and Monitors held a completion ceremony and MVP award ceremony due to the expiration of their terms. Eight people participated, including online participants, and it was a productive meeting with a wide range of opinions reflecting on this year's activities.*

*As the MEL Secretariat, we once again feel the influence of SNS, and we would like to express our deepest gratitude to our*

*ambassadors and monitors for their mission work as good understanding of MEL and certified products.*

*This year's MVP was awarded to Aoi Minori. Minori has worked in the seafood distribution industry and was praised for her excellent contribution of original illustrations using her extensive knowledge of fish. The collaboration with the youtube video of "Sakahiko" was also popular. Congratulations.*



**7. Fukuichi Fishery was awarded the Fisheries Agency Commissioner's Award**

"Skipjack and Vegetable Black Vinegar" by Fukuichi Fishery was awarded the Fisheries Agency Commissioner's Award at the 34 National Quality Review Committee for Processed Seafood Products, and an award ceremony was

held on February 22. For the first time, a product with the MEL logo was honored with the Fisheries Agency Commissioner's Award. I would like to express my respect and heartfelt congratulations to everyone involved for their efforts.

**8. MEL Council Personnel**

Hisanori Kanno, the chief secretariat of MEL Council, will return to his post at the end of March due to the appointment of Nissui, who was seconded to the position. Mr. Masaya Kato, who is retiring from Japan Fisheries Research and Education Agency at the end of March, will be invited as his successor and will work at MEL from

April 1. The replacement of the Chief Secretariat is scheduled to take place at the end of the Annual General Meeting of Shareholders. I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the support Kanno has received from all of you over the past four years.

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**EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT**

The gorgeous topic that came with the sound of spring footsteps is the extension of the Hokuriku Shinkansen to Tsuruga. I hope it will bring energy to the disaster area. On the other hand, it has been a difficult spring for the newly caught sand lance, which heralds spring in the Kansai region. It is reported that fishing was prohibited in Osaka Bay, and the fishing in Harima-nada, which was opened on the 11th, ended after only one day of fishing. In Ise Bay, they continue to ban fishing voluntarily and are working to recover the resources, but there is no positive news. We take the difficulty of fishing with nature seriously, and we are keenly aware of the weight of the "long journey" toward resource recovery.

MEL Certified Products of the month: Frozen Fried Scallop of Yamajin Co., Ltd.

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