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Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

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Dear MEL Partners:

The rainy season has started late. The Paris Olympics is approaching closer, with no sign of peace, the noble principle embodied in the five rings, being realized. The world will soon be filled with a brief burst of enthusiasm.

The addition of fin whales to Japan's commercial whaling program was approved at the Fisheries Policy Council held on June 11. For the first time in a while, the debate on whaling seems to be heating up.

Whale meat from Bryde's whales on the maiden voyage of the new whaling mother ship "Kangei Maru" has reached the market, and we are looking forward to the high quality products that are dissected, cut and frozen in a sterilized environment using ozone water in a temperature-controlled room. I hope that the whale-eating culture that Japan wants to protect and the anti-whaling debate will not become heated again.

1. International standardization related

On June 4, GSSI announced the appointment of Øyvind Ihle as its new CEO (previously described by MEL as Executive Director). He will be the third Executive Director (CEO). Øyvind Ihle is a Norwegian businessperson with a deep knowledge of marine functional

substances, nutrition and aquaculture. I don't know if he knows much about Japan, but I would like him to come to Japan as soon as possible and deepen his understanding of Japan.

2. General meeting

The 10th MEL ordinary general meeting was held on June 19. It was during the

high season for the general meeting of organizations, but Ms. Yoshikawa,

Assistant Manager of the Processing and Distribution Division of the Fisheries Agency, attended the meeting (read the speech from Mr. Fujita, Deputy Director-General).

The business report and settlement of income and expenditure for fiscal 2023 were approved as resolutions. In addition, this year, during the election period of all directors and auditors, due to the personnel affairs of the companies and organizations in which they came from, the replacement of Mr. Amino from All Japan Fish Wholesaler's Association to Mr. Yoshida, and Mr. Kawakami from Mr. Nozaki from CGC Japan, and the reappointment of the others were approved. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Mr. Amino and Mr. Nozaki for their help to the MEL Council. We reported our business plan and

3. Issuance of Modified MEL AMS Ver.2.1

As posted on the MEL homepage, the "MEL Aquaculture Certification Standard Ver. 2.1" went into effect on June 1, 2024. In response to JAB's suggestion, the definition of "scope of certification" and "category of certification" has been clearly described in the text of the standard, rather than revising the standard. In addition, with regard to

4. Status of MEL Certification

The number of new certified entities this month will be one for CoC (In addition, there are five projects in the process of effectuation). We are looking forward to

income and expenditure budget for fiscal 2024.

After the general meeting, the 37th meeting of the Board of Directors was held. The reappointment of President Kakizoe and Managing Director Nagaoka was approved at the general meeting. It was also approved to replace Hisanori Kanno as Secretary-General with Masaya Katoh. I would like to ask you to extend the same courtesy as Mr. Kanno to the new Chief secretariat, Mr. Katoh.

In addition, as reporting items, first, we explained the management review, and second, we reported the revision of aquaculture standards.

The new fiscal year has already begun, but we will work on the new secretariat structure in accordance with the approved business plan.

"Compliance Criteria (Examination Guide) Aquaculture Certification Standard Ver. 2.1," the review standards for each principle have not changed, but the commentaries on reviews have been amended or supplemented to make them easier to understand. The system is scheduled to be put into operation after September 1, 2024.

your application as there is still room for consulting services to support certification acquisition, which is a government-subsidized project.

5. Voice from Certified Entities

Acquisition of MEL for *L. japonica* by land aquaculture production

Yoichi Sato,
Director and General Manager, Raw Materials Division
Riken Food Co., Ltd.

RIKEN FOOD CO., LTD., is working to expand its research and product development centered on wakame seaweed to include a wide variety of seaweed under the "Tokimeki Seaweed Store" seaweed business brand promoted by our parent company RIKEN VITAMIN CO., LTD. (<https://www.tokimeki-kaisouya.jp/>)

As part of these efforts, in October 2021 we opened Rikuzentakata Base, an onshore seaweed aquaculture facility in

Rikuzentakata City, Iwate Prefecture, and began aquaculture production of the green seaweed Suji aonori (green laver) as the first product. Since 2016, we have been working with Professor Masanori Hiraoka of Kochi University, who developed the spore agglomeration method and the multistage aquaculture method, which expands the aquarium as the green laver grows, to acquire the technology and improve the production level.



Land-based green laver aquaculture facility

In addition, we were introduced to Rikuzentakata City Hall by the Hirota

Bay Fisheries Cooperative, which has been providing wakame seaweed for

many years, and they understood our business and gave us permission to conduct the project on city-owned land. Fortunately, the plant is blessed with high-quality seawater, and as of June 2024, after 3 and a half years of operation, production is almost at its original plan. In the production process, the seeds and seedlings produced indoors for about three weeks are transferred to an outdoor aquarium and transferred to a larger aquarium every week for about four weeks. The harvested raw materials are immediately washed thoroughly in the factory, dehydrated, placed on nets and dried overnight. The scent of green laver is very important, so we do dehumidification drying by cold air to prevent the fragrance component from escaping. After drying, after passing through a metal detector, pack in a dehumidification room to minimize moisture absorption. At present, it is sold to processors as a raw material for business use and to local fisheries cooperatives as souvenirs.

Land-based aquaculture of seaweed has been developed as a technology to

stabilize the production of seaweed, which has fluctuated greatly due to recent increases in sea temperatures and changes in the environment. Many companies are now working on the technology. Our company is characterized by stable production throughout the year and our continuous efforts to improve the quality of the raw materials obtained through land-based aquaculture. We thoroughly manage the production process by utilizing the know-how we have cultivated over many years in the processing of wakame. In September 2023, we acquired MEL in order to gain a wider understanding of our efforts and to improve the quality value of our onshore farmed products. This is the first certification in Japan for the production of seaweed in land-based aquaculture, and I feel very honored and humbled as we continue our efforts to improve the quality of our products. In the future, we would like to consider efforts such as obtaining CoC certification so that our customers understand that our products are MEL certified in BtoB or BtoC sales channels.

4. Column

Climate Change and Fishery Certification

Yoshioki Oozeki

Counselor of Japan Fisheries Research and Education Agency

“The sea has changed, and the fish we can catch has also changed,” is what we often hear here. Fisheries news often includes climate change and global warming. I am very concerned about how fishery certification of marine products should be handled if the kinds of fish caught change.



Mr. Yoshioki Oozeki

Some argue that Japan's poor fisheries management has led to a decline in fish catches and that fishing has become a declining industry, but it is not only Japan that has seen a decline in fish catches. According to the FAO, catches are decreasing in Korea and Italy, remaining at a low level in Germany and flat in Norway, with the only countries that are

increasing are the Russian Far East and China, which is expanding high-seas fishing. The catch of sardines in the Mediterranean Sea has decreased by 60% in 20 years since 2000.

A number of studies have linked the decline in global catches to a shift in the distribution of fish from lower latitudes to higher latitudes due to climate warming. Considering the changes in the life history and diet of fish, there are some fish species that cannot secure an ecologically favorable environment and their distribution is decreasing. On the other hand, according to the analysis results of catch statistics since the Meiji period in Japan, periodic changes in the distribution position of fish have been reported (Fig. 1). In recent years, it has been reported that the distribution of yellowtail, Spanish mackerel and cutlass fish in the seas around Japan is moving northward, while Spanish mackerel in the seas around Asia is listed as a “near threatened” species by the IUCN. The evaluation report mentions a decrease in catches in the Seto Inland Sea, but it does not mention an increase in catches in Niigata and Fukui at all. In the context of short-cycle fluctuations and changes in distribution due to long-term

climate change, how scarcity assessment and fishery certification should be conducted is an important question.

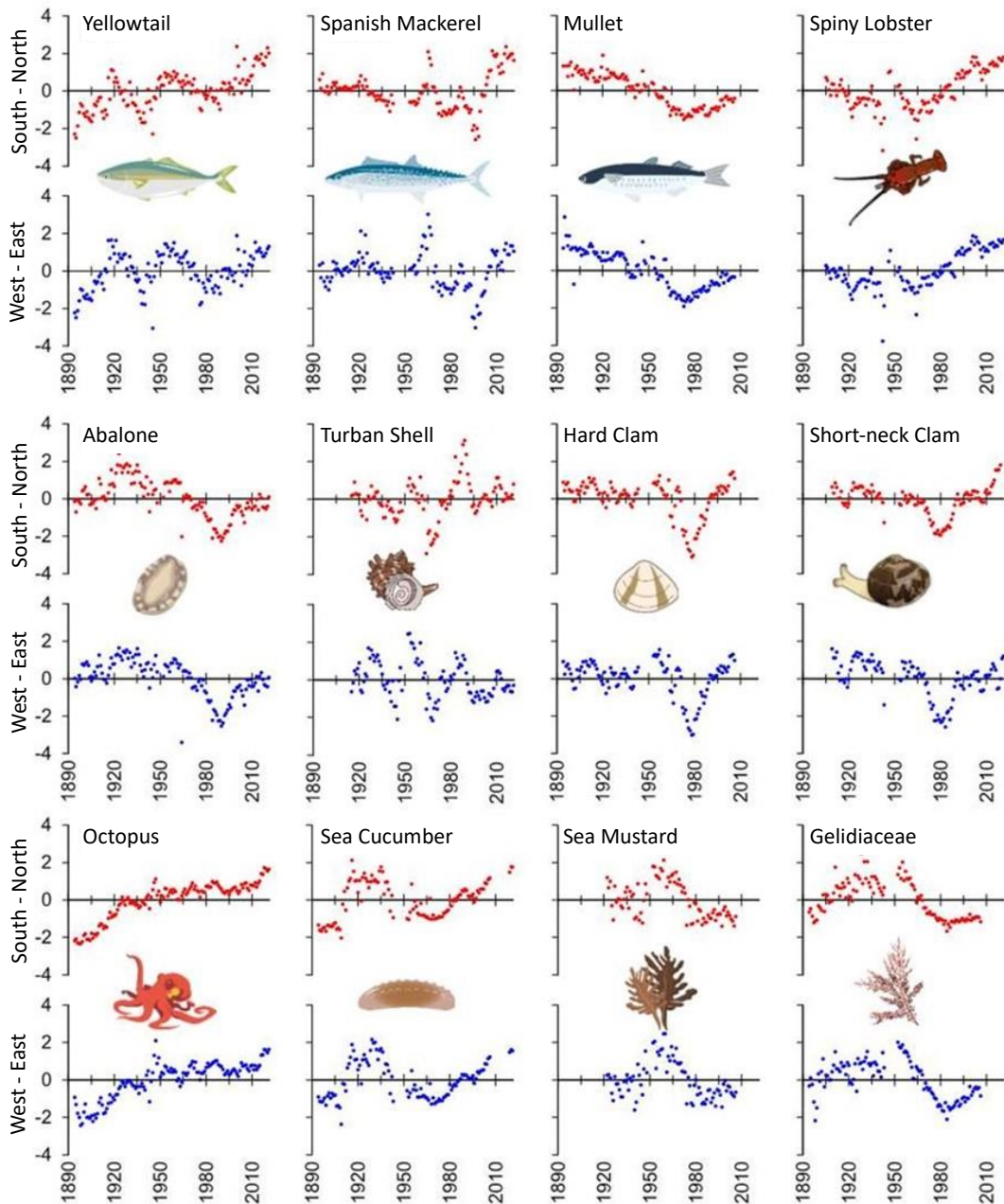
Fishery certification for marine products is often for regional fisheries. As of the end of May, 16 of the 25 fishery certifications issued by MEL are regional fisheries. What to do if regional fisheries face a decline in catches due to ocean warming is a vexing issue. The MSC, which certifies the largest number of fisheries in the world, is understood to maintain the certification if the level is lowered to sustainable fishing to prevent overfishing, even if resources are subjected to external shocks and the limit of reproduction is reduced. In Atlantic mackerel, the distribution range of which has been changing dramatically in recent years, MSC certification was suspended for the reason that the allocation by country was not arranged within ICES. On the other hand, when hoki stocks in New Zealand decreased sharply in the mid-2000s, the HCR immediately changed the catch to match the stocks, and MSC certification continued. If the same thing happened, the Japanese TAC system, which has a two-year lag, would stop certification. In the first place, Japanese fisheries management has historically started with coastal fishery right management, and adaptive management has been implemented in which fishing methods have changed in response to changes in migratory fish species and distribution areas, and regulations have been changed by changing regional arrangements.

Certification bodies can simply suspend or terminate fishery certifications for affected fish, but it is strange that fishermen are not doing anything wrong, but if the fish cannot be harvested due to climate change, their costly fishery certifications will be suspended. There seems to be a debate on how to compensate fishermen for the suspension of certification. Companies that have CoC certification and are engaged in processing and distribution will also suffer. It is also necessary to explain to consumers the cost of changing the label packaging system and the time lag between certification suspension and label product shipment. On the other hand, for consumers who want to participate in the sustainable use of resources, it is doubtful that products produced in areas where there is an abundance and those produced in areas close to the boundary of the distribution can be marketed with the same certification. If consumer preferences have the function of supporting production activities, it is possible to actively certify "sites that are adapting to climate change."

With climate change, the question of "For whom (and for what) is the fishery product certification system?" may be asked anew. In Norway, after the suspension of MSC certification of Atlantic mackerel at ICES, it is said that a movement has started to establish its own fishery product certification, similar to MEL and ASMI. It's no surprise that many

seafood certification systems have different ideas, but they need to be clear about what they're for and what they're

intended for, and consumers may need to be smart enough to identify them.



https://www.fra.go.jp/home/kenkyushokai/press/pr2024/20240416_catch_distribution.html

7. Events

On May 29, Mr. Wakao Hanaoka of Seafood Legacy Co., Ltd., a co-organizer of TSSS, and Mr. Ryan Bigelow and Mr. Hugh Thomas who participated online from

overseas appeared on the stage under the title of "Toward Mainstreaming Sustainable Seafood in 2030: Trajectory of TSSS 10 Years" at the NIKKEI Blue Ocean

Forum held as part of Daimaruyu SDGs ACT5 Festival. With Mr. Hanaoka as the moderator, we looked back on the movement of sustainable seafood in Japan and exchanged opinions on the future. There were 40 viewers at the venue, Marunouchi Hall, and more than

1000 online. We've been getting a lot of calls from MEL lately to participate in these kinds of events, and we've basically accepted them. Once again, we have received many positive responses, and we believe this is meaningful for MEL.



NIKKEI Blue Ocean Forum

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EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT

The general meeting of organizations and companies is almost over. I believe that each organization and each company responded to the difficult environment and achieved their intended results.

And we're heading into a new difficult year. I look forward to your challenge.

I had a chance to preview one of MEL's ambassadors and YouTuber "Sakahiko"'s latest work (interviews with young employees and the president of his company), and I was impressed by two points: that teaching about certification at schools (Junior high school, high school and college) has led to greater understanding of certification in society, and that certification has gained a certain presence in evaluating products in business. It will be posted on YouTube soon, and I hope for a positive response.

MEL Certified Products of the month: Ayu Fish of Gujo Fisheries Cooperative Association

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