



AUG 30th 2024

Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

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Dear MEL Partners:

As the record high heat continue, many things happened in August. It seems that the world and Japan are in a difficult situation to control in politics, economy and society.

Amid the excitement of athletes following a rainy opening ceremony on the Seine, and the whiff of nationalism in the political, social and cultural messages of France, the Paris Olympics came to an end and the baton was passed to the Paralympics.

Unfortunately, the ceasefire during the Olympics did not realize, but rather conflicts spread. A sports documentary masterpiece "Festival of the Nations (Olympia)", although in controversy, was produced to document the 1936 Berlin Olympics. After 90 years, "ethnic strife" is not appropriate for the occasion of the celebration of peace. Human wisdom is needed to stop the chain of retaliation.

1. International standardization related

Inquiries from Asia regarding MEL certification are increasing.

The MEL Council is preparing to exhibit at the Seafood Expo Asia to be held in Singapore on September 4-6 and to hold a seminar to showcase MEL's work.

On the 30th of last month, MEL CoC certification went into effect for two companies in Vietnam that process salmon

from Japan. MEL's first CoC certification for overseas companies. Such cases are expected to increase in the future.

Together with the mutual recognition of the CoC certification with CSC of the United States, which is currently being finalized, we envision that the exhibition and seminar at Seafood EXPO Asia in Singapore will provide momentum for MEL to expand overseas.

2. Status of MEL Certification

The number of new certified entities this month will be zero. There is no particular

reason. We will continue to focus on activities to promote certification acquisition.

3. Voice from Certified Entities
Strengthening Regional Brand with MEL Certification

Masaru Okawa,
President and Representative Director, Ako City Fisheries Cooperative Association



The President, Masaru Okawa



Sakoshi Oyster

The history of oyster farming in the Sakoshi area began around 1974 in order to bring about changes in the form of fishing, which at the time was with the main method by fishing boats. The production volume has been increasing year by year, and in recent years, the scale of production has reached about 500 tons (in terms of the amount of shelled oyster), and it is the core item of Ako City Fisheries Cooperative Association.

In recent years, we have been focusing on the promotion of regional branding in order to make further strides in oyster farming. We received a proposal from a business partner to acquire MEL certification and work to further

establish a regional brand. We believe that the certification system will be essential for future fishery production activities, so we acquired the group certification.

The Sakoshi oysters we produce are called 1 year oysters, and the seeds are seeded around May of each year. Shipments start around November of the same year and production ends around April of the following year. There are many high evaluations from the market such as the strong sweetness without the peculiar taste, and we hope that this acquisition of MEL certification will further promote the fact that the oysters we produce are safe and secure.

However, we believe that we must continue efforts to make consumers and market participants aware of MEL certification. I believe that MEL certification will serve as a proof of the confidence of producers in their efforts for safety and security, and that it will lead to the further establishment of regional brands by encouraging consumers to understand our efforts for

sustainable production activities in consideration of the environment.

Finally, if "Sakoshi oyster" which has acquired MEL certification, connects producers and consumers, and if the activities of producers lead to a better understanding of consumers, I think it will be the greatest significance of obtaining certification and conducting production.

4. Column

"MEL, flap your wings."

Kazuo Shima

Marine Ecolabel Japan (MEL), which started as a business of Japan Fisheries Association in 2007, has been inherited and developed by the General Incorporated Association Marine Ecolabel Japan Council established in 2016. MEL was subsequently recognized by the Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative (GSSI) in 2019, and in 2023 with a new Benchmark Tool (Version 2). As a result, MEL conformed to the "Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products" established by FAO, and its fairness and transparency were assured, and MEL was able to conduct its activities as a scheme widely accepted by the international community. I would like to express my respect to MEL President Kakizoe and all those involved for their hard work.

It is said that the idea of seafood ecolabel certification system was triggered by the ICNAF (International Commission for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries), which

imposed a long-term total ban on fishing in the grand bank fishing grounds off the coast of Canada, where fishing activities were conducted in a mixed manner, resulting in resource depletion caused by overfishing. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) was the first to tackle the problem. In 1996, it joined with the food company Unilever to form the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), a non-profit organization headquartered in the United Kingdom to issue certification to fishermen practicing sustainable fisheries. The standards were established in 1998, and the activities started in earnest. In addition, the field of activities is expanded to include processing and distribution, and seafood recognized as sustainable by MSC are given MSC certification mark.

Today, 12% of the world's wild catch is said to be caught by MSC certified fishing vessels. MSC activities in Japan started in 2006, but the spread of MSC certification

in Japan is taking time.

In 2015, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a target of 2030, and the world is now making strenuous efforts to achieve them. In the field of fisheries, activities are being conducted to achieve the goal of "protecting the abundance of the sea," and seafood ecolabel is expected to be an effective means of achieving this goal. The national government has set up a certification promotion team in the Fisheries Agency and is focusing on certification projects, including promotion of certification acquisition. It can be said that MEL is given a good place to work.

The certification business has taken many twists and turns to establish itself as it is today, and it did not happen overnight. Senior Managing Director of Japan Fisheries Association, Takase (former Deputy Director-General of the Fisheries Agency) said, "In the early days of the MSC, Japanese administration tended to be perceived as an imposition of Western values." When former Director-General of FAO Fisheries Ichiro Nomura became a councilor of the MSC after his retirement, he was ridiculed by a reporter from an industry newspaper, saying, "Mr. Nomura became a member of an environmental group, didn't he?"

A Japanese company once got into trouble in England, the birthplace of the marine ecolabel. In this case, British companies used eco-label certification to pressure Japanese suppliers of continuing whaling. They threatened not to recognize it as a

sustainable product on the grounds that one of their business partners is involved in whaling. In the United Kingdom, where the use of eco-labels for fishery products was already widespread, not being allowed to use eco-labels effectively bans imports of the products of that company. In the end, Japan responded by changing the structure of the whaling industry and the ownership structure of the operating companies, but with considerable pain. It was an unreasonable request to impose one's own values on whale products. Britain, which was once a major whaling country, seems to dislike whales. How are fishery products exported to the British market from Norway, Iceland, Greenland, Russia, the United States, and other countries that currently engage in whaling on a small scale?

In the world, some say whales are not food for humans, and they seem to be moving to keep them out of the human diet. Is it okay? The total production of sea surface fisheries in the world has been leveled off since reaching the level of 90 million tons at the end of the 20 century. On the other hand, according to an estimate by Seiji Osumi and Chikara Tamura, the annual consumption of marine resources by whales in the world's oceans is 280 million ~ 500 million tons, which is 3~6 times the total production of sea surface fisheries in the world. The FAO should also devote its efforts to research and study on the comprehensive use of the sea surface, including cetaceans. Whale meat is a delicious food with high

nutritional value.

5. Events

On July 29, we were invited to participate in "Thinking about the Present and Future of Fisheries 2024," a workshop organized by the Food, Environment, and Social Affairs Departments. Last year, MEL Advisory Board Chairperson Dr. Hiroyuki Matsuda and Mr. Kakizoe took the stage. This year, MEL Advisory Board member Dr. Kotaku Makino and Mr. Kakizoe took the stage together.

Under the title of "Fisheries, Women, and a Sustainable Marine Environment" by Dr. Makino and "To continue to eat delicious fish," by Dr. Kakizoe, they shared plenty of fish stories for more than two hours in the meeting room of the Women's Federation and online. Despite the hot weather, many people came to the event, and it was especially exciting to hear about Dr. Makino's activities in fisheries.



Plaza ef in Yotsuya, Tokyo

From August 21 to 23, we exhibited at the 26 the Japan International Seafood Show sponsored by Japan Fisheries Association. In addition to the MEL Council, the Ainan Fisheries Cooperative, Yonkyu, Hayashi Fish Farm, Marui Store, and Okamura Food Industry exhibited at the Fisheries Eco-Label Corner of the venue this year. In addition to the MEL corner, Kunihiro, Nanyo Be-Joy, Tsuji Suisan, Sakamoto,

Tokushima Uoichiba, Dainichi, Asahi Kyohan, Japan Purse Seiner's Association, Kyokuyo, and Nissui exhibited independently or at prefectural booths and were very successful. MSC, ASC, BAP and Alaska RFM, which are headquartered overseas, also exhibited and actively engaged in promotion activities.



The MEL booth at the 26th Japan International Seafood Show

Also on the 21st, a roundtable meeting to promote MEL certification was held at the venue, sponsored by Japan Fisheries Association. 66 people participated and

gave valuable opinions on MEL management. We will utilize it for the management of the council. Thank you very much.



The roundtable meeting to promote MEL certification

Also on the 21st, the MEL Certificate Award Ceremony was held jointly by JFRCA (Japan Fisheries Resource Conservation Association) and MERI (Marine Ecology Research Institute). Participants from 13 companies and

organizations participated, and representatives of these companies and organizations expressed their heartfelt commitment. After the event, a social gathering was held, and the participants, the certification body, and the scheme

owner were able to share a deep communication. Of course, there will be various difficulties in the future, but I was

pleased to see that the circle of realizing a sustainable seafood industry in Japan has expanded.



MEL Certificate award ceremony

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EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT

Obon was swayed by typhoons and earthquakes. As for preparation for natural disasters, I believe you have prepared and trained as a BCP (Business Continuity Plan in the event of a disaster). It's not good if "I don't even know where the manual is anymore" is the situation. Be sure to read "Natural disasters come when you forget" by Torahiko Terada. Last week, we had a seafood show, a meeting to promote the acquisition of MEL certification, and a ceremony for awarding MEL certification. I hope that we will do our best together for the coming autumn.

*MEL Certified Products of the month: Frozen Seabass Fillet
Certified entities: Kaiko Bussan Co.,Ltd*

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