



JUL 30th 2024

Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

## **MEL NEWS VOL. 76 (ENGLISH EDITION)**

Dear MEL Partners:

*The Shibusawa (Tsuda, Kitasato) boom, which flourished with the introduction of new bank bills, seems to indicate the desire of the people of the Reiwa era to capitalize on the vitality of the Meiji people, who pursued the West with their "latecomers with enterprising spirit."*

*The fact that MEL has been able to make some progress on the "sustainable use of fishery resources" concept, together with the people concerned, as the "seafood eco-label recognized by the world originated in Japan", I think it is because Japan inherited the DNA of the Meiji people, who were "latecomers with enterprising spirit." I will do my best not to lose to my predecessors. Hot summer has come as forecasted. We can only hope that the red tide damage in western Japan will not spread further, which has already started since the end of June, and also that the deaths and poor growth of farmed marine products due to high water temperatures will not spread.*

### **1. International standardization related**

*There was a change of the Executive Director (CEO) and staffs at GSSI, and they seemed to be busy with transitioning and there were no major developments to report. I'm a little concerned about frequent staff changes, as*

*this job requires a high level of expertise and a relationship of trust with society and scheme owners, the retention of staff is important, and I would like to ask the new CEO to form a stable team and operate it.*

### **2. Status of MEL Certification**

*The number of new certified entities this month will be three for aquaculture and three for CoC. The number of certifications issued has been compiled for the first time in a long*

*time. The number of inquiries and requests for certification is increasing, and we look forward to the future.*

### **3. Voice from Certified Entities**

#### **"Making delicious red sea bream"**

**Taku Oseto, Representative Director, Oseto Suisan Co., Ltd.**

**So Oseto, Director**

*Nice to meet you. We are Oseto Suisan which runs an aquaculture business in Oshima, Kushimoto-cho, Wakayama Prefecture. Since our establishment in 1948, we have developed our business responding to the times, from trawling to aquaculture, and from catching to nurturing. Currently, we cultivate mainly red sea bream, striped jack and three-line grunt.*

*I feel that it is becoming more difficult to farm fish these days due to global warming and marine pollution. Rising sea temperatures in summer have created an environment that is prone to poor growth and mass mortality of fish. Fish used as raw materials for feed have also been caught poorly and feed prices have soared.*



***The two son of president Oseto, So on the right and Kai on the left.***



### ***Special Red Seabream of Oseto Suisan***

*Under such circumstances, the SDGs began to be proclaimed about 10 years ago. In particular, the need for sustainable aquaculture has been emphasized over the past two to three years. It is a sustainable effort to leave abundant seas for the future.*

*Since our company acquired JAS Standard from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in 2008 as the first case, we have been working on aquaculture in consideration of the natural environment. We hope that this acquisition of MEL certification will*

*prove our efforts and add more value to our products.*

*We believe that continuing to produce delicious fish is a major prerequisite for expanding MEL certification. No matter how much effort is made to meet MEL certification, customers will choose it if it is not delicious. We will continue to produce delicious fish through sustainable aquaculture with the motto of "Fish First" in order to raise awareness of MEL certification and make our efforts known. We are committed to contributing to MEL certification through our efforts.*

#### 4. Column

##### "TSSS: A Look Back on 10 Years of Japanese Fisheries"

**Aiko Yamauchi,**  
**Executive Vice President of Seafood Legacy Co., Ltd.**

Seafood Legacy Co., Ltd. will co-host the Tokyo Sustainable Seafood Summit (Hereinafter, TSSS) 2024 with Nikkei ESG from October 8 to 10, 2024 at the International Forum in Tokyo.



**Aiko Yamauchi, Executive Vice President of Seafood Legacy Co., Ltd.**

The TSSS has been held since 2015 and become one of the largest flagship events in Asia, symbolizing the growth of the sustainable seafood movement centered in Japan. We are preparing daily for the 10th TSSS to be an event where we look back on the history of the movement together with our stakeholders, celebrate its development, and draw a new common picture for 2030, the target year for achieving the SDGs. MEL has

participated as an important stakeholder in Japan's fisheries industry, including Chairperson Kakizoe's appearance on the stage and the establishment of a booth at the venue.

I was given the opportunity to write this article while reflecting on Japan's sustainable seafood movement. On July 16, the big news came: "Pacific bluefin tuna stocks increased 10 times in 12 years,

*achieving the target 13 years ahead of schedule."*

*About 10 years ago, when the first TSSS was held in 2015, the Scientific Committee pointed out that the Pacific bluefin tuna stock had decreased to about 4% of the initial stock (estimated stock before fishery operations began), and the introduction and implementation of urgent and severe resource recovery measures had become an issue. Japan, in particular, was the world's largest producer and consumer of Pacific bluefin tuna, so it bore great international responsibility and its leadership was being questioned both at home and abroad.*

*Although there are still challenges to be overcome in order to utilize Pacific bluefin tuna resources with peace of mind, I am convinced that the past 10 years have been an extremely important experience for Japan's fisheries industry when talking about sustainable seafood, as diverse stakeholders such as government officials, fishermen, researchers, distributors, and NGOs have spared no effort to achieve the same goal of "restoring Pacific bluefin tuna."*

*Looking back over the past 10 years, Japan's fisheries industry has achieved many achievements in addition to the recovery of Pacific bluefin tuna, an international resource. For example, at the TSSS in 2018, we hosted a keynote speech entitled "Strengthening resource*

*assessment and management, and measures against IUU (Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated) fisheries", and the Director-General of the Fisheries Agency at the time shared widely the direction Japan was heading in fisheries administration.*

*In fact, as a result of the historic revision of the Fisheries Act in 2018, the concepts of "harvest strategies" and "management reference points" that had been international standards were introduced into policy. As a result, national resource management targets have been clearly defined, and management methods for achieving these targets have shifted to more objective quantity management. From the perspective of sustainable seafood, this reform has a positive effect on ensuring the sustainability of domestically produced fishery products and has the potential to create new market value. As for measures against IUU fishing, the "Act on Regulation of Domestic Distribution of Specified Aquatic Animals and Plants (hereinafter referred to as the Act on Appropriate Fisheries Distribution)" came into force in 2022, incorporating strict verification of imported fishery products, which had been advanced in Europe and the United States.*

*The Act not only protects the Japanese market from the risks posed by IUU fishery products, but also means that Japan, as an international fishery market along with*



*Europe and the United States, will participate responsibly in international measures against IUU fishing. It was welcomed by many stakeholders because it would help fishermen, who have been suffering from low fish prices for a long time, to reduce their exposure to unfair market competition from IUU products. It would also reduce the risk that distributors would be involved in international illegal activities such as procuring IUU products.*

*At the TSSS, each year, relevant parties provided information and progress on these new frameworks through keynote speeches and panel discussions, and discussions were held on issues and solutions.*

*As a major trend in the sustainable seafood movement, we must not forget the progress made by Japanese fishery product-related companies. In 2015, when the term "sustainable seafood" was not yet widely used in Japan, I remember that only a few Japanese companies participated in TSSS and presented their initiatives. In recent years, however, as more companies have announced sustainable seafood procurement policies and made substantial improvements to their businesses, the TSSS program, including speakers, has grown to become one of the largest flagship events in Asia.*

*Companies' efforts tend to be judged with the perfect 100 score, but in the TSSS, the participants openly shared their*

*experiences of gaining the understanding and cooperation of partners, mainly suppliers, in order to have effectiveness, as well as difficult issues and points that did not go well in actual efforts. The audience, who are our stakeholders, often commented that it was very useful, and we are grateful to all the speakers.*

*Over the past 10 years, environmental due diligence and human rights due diligence in the marine product supply chain have become an international trend, and are becoming increasingly prevalent in Japan as unavoidable issues for companies to continue their businesses. Given the complexity and scale of environmental and social issues, the Japanese fisheries industry is now at the threshold of working together to resolve common issues and create a better society, regardless of industry or competition, building on the achievements of individual companies.*

*The theme of the 10th TSSS this year is "Mainstreaming Sustainable Seafood." I realize that the path that Japan's fisheries industry has taken over the past 10 years has been far from smooth. However, in order for Japan's path to date to permeate within Japan and reach even greater heights toward 2030, we need a society in which many stakeholders can participate and engage in open and transparent dialogue toward the common goal of a sustainable fisheries industry.*

Japan is home to the world's leading seafood companies and the world's third largest imported seafood market. Seafood Legacy believes that taking international leadership to resolve these issues is an important approach that will eventually lead to the recovery of the Japanese fisheries industry and to sustainable growth.

I hope that by sharing the experiences of Japan's successes and failures with the participants, the Japanese movement will take root as a frontrunner in the pursuit of environmental sustainability and social responsibility, and that TSSS will continue to grow as a platform that can lead such a movement, so that we can work together with the MEL Council, MEL

certification holders, and many others involved in this industry.

< Outline of Tokyo Sustainable Seafood Summit 2024 >

Date: October 8th (Tue), 9th (Wed), 10th (Thu), 2024

Venue: Tokyo International Forum Hall B7  
Fee: Free (pre-registration required)

Sponsor: Seafood Legacy Co., Ltd., Nikkei ESG

Co-Sponsored by the David and Lucille Packard Foundation and the Walton Family Foundation

Details and application:  
<https://sustainableseafoodnow.com/2024/>

##### **5. Last year's "MEL certified fisheries and aquaculture landings" has been finalized.**

We conduct surveys every year with the cooperation of certified entities.

The following table shows the volume of wild catch and aquaculture landings under MEL production stage certification for the fiscal year 2023. Volume was 455,000 tons, increased by 72,000 tons

(18%) from the previous year, and accounted for 12% of total production in Japan which was 10% in the previous year. Items with MEL logo are currently under scrutiny. We would like to thank all of our certified entities for their time and cooperation.

(Unit: Metric Ton)

	Certified Species	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Japan Total Production	
							2022 (Preliminary)	%MEL
Wild Catch	Chum Salmon	45,115	45,835	47,841	78,949	53,252	60,100	89%
	Skipjack			53,304	40,792	132,018	152,600	87%
	Albacore			4,201	661	5,296	32,200	16%
	Yellowfin Tuna			6,851	5,135	27,605	52,500	53%
	Bigeye Tuna			578	360	424	26,600	2%
	Bluefin Tuna (Northern East Atlantic)			63	57	57	11,700	0%
	Sardine			1,945	242	71	680,900	0%
	Anchovy			6,069	11,835	6,663	114,200	6%
	Round Herring			2	14	14	88,600	0%
	Juvenile Anchovy (Shirasu)	4,569	4,211	15,902	9,728	18,347	48,900	38%
	Chub Mackerel	2,004	3,054	6,107	46,008	40,178	261,100	15%
	Jack Mackerel			804	29,226	22,373	92,000	24%
	Yellowtail (Buri)			2,078	6,320	8,936	80,800	11%
	Okhotsk Atka Mackerel				6,269	4,924	31,500	16%
	Herring				2,723	2,086	18,000	12%
	Japanese Spanish Mackerel			90	33	16	9,800	0%
	Red Seabream			11	9	6	14,400	0%
	Japanese Sea Bass				62	119	4,800	2%
	Red Snow Crab		3,093	5,542	4,114	5,727	11,900	48%
	Japanese Surf Clam			896	836	802	5200 *	15%
	Freshwater Clam (Shijimi)		783	803	721	905	9,211	10%
Sweetfish (Ayu)			6	7	7	1,695	0%	
Glass Shrimp					152	500 *	30%	
Others	40	91				...		
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>51,728</b>	<b>57,067</b>	<b>153,093</b>	<b>244,101</b>	<b>329,978</b>	<b>2,844,965</b>	<b>12%</b>
Aquaculture	Yellowtail (Buri)	31,053	37,822	36,306	31,813	37,103	94,300	39%
	Greater Amberjack (Kampachi)	3,393	3,578	5,309	3,879	2,911	24,400	12%
	Yellowtail Amberjack (Hiramasa)	433	287	86	862	731	4,300 *	17%
	Buri-hira (hybrid Yellowtail)					290	-	-
	Red Seabream	14,989	16,977	17,579	17,718	16,859	68,000	25%
	Striped Jack	613	632	701	854	507	4,700	11%
	Japanese Flounder	250	195	235	220	230	1,700	14%
	Coho Salmon	1,428	3,458	3,625	3,887	4,632	22,100	21%
	Rainbow trout					42	4,736	1%
	Sweetfish (Ayu)			695	691	725	3,387	21%
	Scallop			864	72,361	51,987	151,300	34%
	Oyster			4,041	4,168	6,195	146,300	4%
	Sea urchin				0.7	0.8	200 *	0%
	White Leg Shrimp					14	158 *	9%
	Wakame Seaweed	266	2,073	1,917	1,748	1,811	49,600	4%
	Monostroma Seaweed				282	523	6,700 *	8%
	Ulva Seaweed					49	-	-
Others	7	420	372			...		
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>52,432</b>	<b>65,442</b>	<b>71,731</b>	<b>138,484</b>	<b>124,610</b>	<b>879,299</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>104,160</b>	<b>122,510</b>	<b>224,825</b>	<b>382,585</b>	<b>454,588</b>	<b>3,724,264</b>	<b>12%</b>	

### 6.MEL auditor training (CPD training)

*This is the first of a series of training seminars held three times a year (Two CPDs and one training of new judges) to maintain and improve the quality of certification audit.*

*It was an online workshop using ZOOM*

*and 11 people participated. This time, the curriculum was designed to reflect the fact that MEL has become the second in the world to be approved by the new GSSI standards (Global Benchmark Tool Ver. 2.0) and has become an international*



standard certification scheme.

In particular, we made sure of the followings:

1. Sharing the latest information,
2. Audit exercises using “the breakout room” feature of ZOOM
3. In the preparation of the audit reports, the scientific basis should stand the international stakeholders’ interests and concerns.

The lecturers were Mr. Tsuneyuki Aoki (Technical Advisor, Technofer) and Ms. Yuka Nagasawa (Japan Fisheries Resource Conservation Association, here in after JFRCA) as the criteria for compliance, Dr. Eiji Tanaka (Professor Emeritus, Tokyo University of Marine Science and

Technology) and Mr. Susumu Endo (JFRCA) as the fishery certification, Dr. Masashi Maita (Professor, Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology) and Dr. Miyabi Yano (JFRCA) as the aquaculture certification, and Dr. Naotomo Nakahara (Professor, Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology) and Dr. Shinji Kuwahara (JFRCA) as the CoC.

We believe that the content was appropriate for CPD = Skill Improvement Training. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all the judges who participated in the heat wave and the teachers who served as instructors.

## **7. Market**

Although the market continues to face a difficult environment, this month saw a variety of events, including the Marine Day, Fish Day, Hangesho, Obon, and Doyo Ushi Day, and both retail and restaurant businesses focused on sales promotion. Various surveys have revealed that consumers are becoming more conscious of protecting their livelihoods amid the

lack of growth in real wages, which is troubling in terms of expanding consumption. On the other hand, we have recently received an increasing number of requests from distributors to obtain seafood ecolabels and use it for sales promotion. As a scheme owner, we are responding positively to these requests.

## **8. Events**

As part of the Marine Day commemorative event, we exhibited a booth at the Marine Day Project in Aomi, held at Tokyo International Cruise Terminal on Sunday, July 15.

The focus of the event was the viewing of a car carrier ship and a survey ship of the Japan Coast Guard. The opening was a

compact event with only greetings from the Minister of Maritime Policy and the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (including a video message from the Prime Minister). Most of the exhibitors were related to marine transportation business.

Most of the visitors were accompanied by

parents and children, and probably because MEL was the only company related to seafood, many people came to the MEL booth, and both parents and children gathered for goods. As a result of

the secretariat's efforts to raise interest in the seafood ecolabel, the number of followers on Instagram increased by about 130.



**Left: visitors to MEL booth    Right: car carrier ship of Mitsui O.S.K. Lines**

The Marine Open Innovation Organization hosted the Blue Economy EXPO in Shimizu City, Shizuoka Prefecture from July 17 to 18. I visited the ORNIS marine radar system, which is expected to lead to smarter coastal fisheries. The acquisition and use of oceanographic data by ocean radar have already been implemented in Miyazaki Prefecture and other areas, and its effects have been confirmed. ORNIS is aiming to expand nationwide as a startup led by President Tetsuzo Matsumoto. The information will be disclosed to research institutes, business operators and the media after the four radar sites in Shizuoka Prefecture begin operations soon.

On July 23, we were invited to a seafood export promotion seminar hosted by JETRO Shizuoka (cosponsored by Yaizu City), where Secretary General Kato and

Section Chief Akimoto gave lectures on MEL certification as a fisheries eco-label seminar. Attendance was not limited to business operators, but also from the government and fishermen's cooperatives, and many questions were raised.

The 26th Japan International Seafood Show will be held at Tokyo Big Sight on August 21 and 23, sponsored by Japan Fisheries Association. The MEL Council will exhibit at the Marine Eco-Label corner, the same as every year. In addition to the MEL booth displaying certified products, four MEL-certified companies and organizations will be exhibiting at the Marine Eco-Label Corner.

In addition, on the first day of the Seafood Show, from 13:30 on Wednesday, August 21 at Seminar Room B, the Japan Fisheries Association is planning to hold a meeting to discuss the revision of standards that

MEL is working on, and to exchange opinions with business operators on the theme of "MEL Certification Promotion Round-table Meeting" - Surviving the New

Age of Seafood Industry. We look forward to your participation.

Application: <https://www.melj.jp/3547>

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**EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT**

The special feature at the beginning of the 2023 White Paper on Fisheries that was recently released is "Umi-gyo". I believe it is highly significant in that it has moved from a view of fisheries as "I am the person who catches, the person who makes, and I am the person who eats" to a direction in which the diversity of Japan is utilized more widely and deeply through the participation of the people. We hope that people will be able to appreciate the value of nature by touching it directly.

As Ms. Yamauchi mentioned in the column, at the Northern Committee of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) held in Kushiro, Hokkaido, an agreement was reached to increase the catch quota for bluefin tuna from 2025. Japan's catch quota will increase by 50% for large fish and 10% for small fish. It will be formally decided at the annual meeting to be held in the fall and will be effective from January 25. It is good news that various irrationalities occurring in the field to comply with the framework can lead to improvement even if it is a small step. I would like to express my respect for the efforts of the government and businesses involved and rejoice as a successful example of resource management.

Again this year, the torrential rain at the end of the rainy season caused serious damage in various areas. We would like to express our heartfelt sympathy to all those affected by the disaster and pray for a speedy recovery.

I wish you all the best in the hot summer.

MEL Certified Products of the month: Smoked Chum Salmon of Hokkaido, Co-op Sustainable

Certified entities: Hokkaido Federation of Fisheries Cooperative Associations  
Matsuoka Suisan Co., Ltd.

Marine Eco-Label Japan Council Secretariats  
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