



MEL NEWS

MEL certified products ▶



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MEL Council

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Dear MEL Partners:

The absurd torrential rains that have hit the areas affected by the Noto Peninsula earthquake are heartbreaking. I would like to express my heartfelt condolences to those who lost their lives and my sincere sympathies to those affected by the disaster.

China's complete ban on imports of Japanese seafood, which began in protest against the ocean release of treated water from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, is expected to be eased under the IAEA framework. Given that this issue has been used as a political bargaining tool, we cannot be optimistic, but we hope for normalization as soon as possible.

Typhoon No. 10, which struck at the end of last month through the beginning of this month, left various scars across almost the entire Japanese archipelago with three keywords: "meandering," "stagnation," and "remote rainfall." Experts cite high seawater temperatures, even at depths of 50 meters, as one of the causes, and this becoming the norm is a serious problem for the fishing industry. Nevertheless, good news such as the favorable start of the Pacific saury fishing, following on from bonito, has been gladly received. For Japanese people, it has been a long time since we felt the happiness of catching seasonal fish in season. Although the forecast for autumn salmon which is entering its peak season is for a poor catch, we hope that it will follow the bonito and saury.

1. International standardization related

The new GSSI Secretariat has finally started to move. We have requested an early visit to Japan from the new Secretary

General, Mr. Ihle, but there is no prospect of this being realized yet. Meanwhile, we have been asked to speak at the GSSI

session at Seafood EXPO North America, scheduled for March next year.

The MEL Council exhibited at Seafood EXPO Asia in Singapore from September 4th to 6th, and Secretary General Masaya Kato gave a presentation at the seminar on the 5th. Although EXPO at Singapore is smaller in scale compared to Boston and Barcelona, we believe that it was an important opportunity for the MEL Council, which is strengthening its ties with Asia. The following is a report from Section Chief Akimoto, who traveled with the Secretary General:

We participated in Seafood EXPO Asia 2024, held in Singapore from September

4th to 6th. The MEL Council participated in the project conducted by the Japan Fisheries Association as part of the “Establishment of Sustainable Fisheries Resources Utilization Project,” a project subsidized by the Fisheries Agency. MEL had a booth exhibition, and Secretary General Kato gave a presentation on the current situation in Japan at the seminar. A total of 345 businesses from 46 countries exhibited, including 40 companies from Japan, 33 of which were in the Japan Pavilion, making a notable presence. We hope that MEL can contribute to promoting exports as a mark of sustainable seafood from Japan.



(Left) Japanese Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Singapore, Mr. Ishikawa, visiting the MEL booth. **(Right)** Secretary General Kato delivering a presentation.

2. Status of MEL Certification

The number of new certified entities this month was two in total; one for aquaculture and one for CoC.

3. Voice from Certified Entities

The Challenge of Farming Buri-Hira in Sukumo Bay

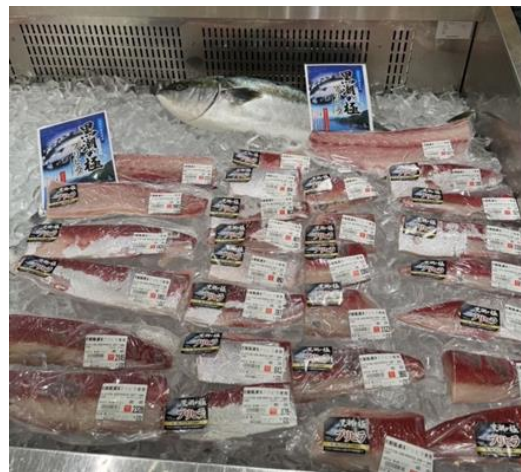
Noboru Kawaji
Kuroshio Suisan Co., Ltd.

Since our founding in 1989 as the predecessor company Kuroshio Suisan LLC, we have operated fish farming in Sukumo Bay, known for the inflow of the Kuroshio Current from Bungo Channel and the abundant nutrient supply from its rich mountains. We have made the most of this geographical advantage. In the rich natural environment of southwestern Shikoku, our uniquely cultivated and produced "Kuroshio no Kiwami" has received high quality evaluations and is handled in markets, fresh fish specialty stores, and department stores nationwide.

For the aquaculture business conducted within the natural environment, maintaining and preserving a good marine environment is an essential issue. Furthermore, to continue to promote ourselves as an aquaculture company with strong appeal both domestically and internationally, obtaining internationally recognized certification is indispensable. At the end of last year, we obtained MEL certification for three species: Red Sea Bream, Yellowtail, and Buri-Hira.

Even before obtaining the certification, we adopted our own extruded pellets for all feeds in consideration of the seabed environment and minimizing leftover feed. In recent years, we have also actively adopted feed with a low fishmeal ratio from the perspective of sustainability.

The fish we are particularly focusing on is "Buri-Hira." "Buri-Hira" is a completely farm-raised fish developed by the Kinki University Fisheries Laboratory, a world-renowned research institution in seedling production technology for aquaculture. It is a hybrid fish created by crossing a female yellowtail (Buri) and a male amberjack (Hiramasa), inheriting the good qualities of both parents. As a fish that combines the rich flavor and fat of yellowtail with the beauty and texture of amberjack, it has garnered a great deal of interest as a sustainable farmed species that does not rely on wild catch.



"Buri-Hira" sales display shelf.

The environment surrounding the aquaculture industry has become increasingly severe. However, we will continue to make efforts to receive customers' unwavering support by leveraging our accumulated experience and actively introducing new knowledge and advanced technology.

We hope that MEL certification will become widely recognized both domestically and internationally, and will evolve into a major scheme that

leads to protecting the ocean and the lives and food of producers and consumers.

4. Column

Increase consumer awareness through supermarkets.

Murao Yoshihisa

Secretary General, National Supermarket Association of Japan

We, the National Supermarket Association of Japan, have several reasons for participating in the MEL Council as a full member. As you know, our regular member companies, the supermarket operators, provide consumers with much of the food that is served on their dining tables. We provide fresh produce, livestock products, seafood products, prepared foods, dairy products, and processed foods, either as raw materials, processed products, or in their fresh state, tailored to their characteristics.

As dining habits become more diverse, consumption of seafood as ingredients has decreased, while demand for livestock products has increased. There is also a shift in consumer preferences towards ready-to-eat products like prepared foods.

Although seafood consumption is generally regarded as beneficial for health and has been actively consumed by Japanese people historically, the consumption of seafood is decreasing contrary to the global trend. From the

perspective of the fisheries producers, the situation is not satisfactory from the viewpoint of global resource conservation, despite the development of aquaculture. Stable supply of seafood products not only protects the health and food culture of the Japanese people but also holds significant expectations as an export industry.

The significance of providing information about this certification system and the related certification to supermarkets, as well as feeding back the utilization results and challenges from supermarkets to the MEL Council to make MEL certification more user-friendly, is the role and reason for our participation as an industry association.

Therefore, we would like to hear from Ito-Yokado, one of our full members, about their initiatives and challenges as a retailer, and think about the role of our association as an industry group.

- (1) Reasons for obtaining MEL certification*
- Initially started with initiatives for*

fresh fish products labeled “Visible Face Fish.”

- *Began selling ASC-certified products in 2016 and MSC in 2018.*
- *In 2019, Seven & i Group announced its environmental declaration “GREEN CHALLENGE 2050.”*

Ito-Yokado became the first major retailer to obtain MEL certification, starting with four domestic fish species in 2020 and expanding to nine species.

(2) How a retailer utilizes MEL certification and future prospects

- *Aiming for a symbiotic society with nature (sustainable procurement) as a company, and appealing these efforts to consumers.*
- *Communicating the value of sustainable products to consumers through POP displays in stores.*
- *Distinguishing between selling MSC and ASC certified products for imports, and MEL certified products for domestic seafood products.*
- *Increasing consumer awareness and strengthening initiatives for certified products.*

While this initiative is not necessarily cost-effective and could be challenging without consumer understanding, it has been supported by producers and fisheries workers who say, “If Ito-Yokado does it, let's get MEL certification.” This support has been a driving force. One

representative mentioned that obtaining MEL certification is not merely a ‘transaction’ but a ‘commitment’ to continue providing delicious fish to customers together with producers. This statement is significant in considering the role of our industry group in relation to the connection between retailers and producers.

As mentioned earlier, supermarkets ultimately deliver food to consumers. For seafood products, obtaining globally standard certifications such as MEL certification and actively handling certified products are important in terms of the continued use of fisheries resources as food. I think it is important for each supermarket company in Japan to understand MEL certification, which is based on the premise of sustainable use of domestic fisheries resources, as supermarkets play an infrastructural role in society.

This example may only be one of many, but expanding the acquisition of MEL certification and handling certified products is important for each supermarket companies. As an industry association, we believe it is important to provide opportunities for as many supermarket companies as possible to engage in this activity and create more connections between supermarkets and the businesses that supply seafood products to them.

5. Events

Ms. Yukari Kobayashi, the responsible officer, will report on the events that MEL participated in or hosted this summer. The

theme is "Teaching Children about a Sustainable Society through MEL."



1. Lobby Exhibition at Shufukaikan Plaza F:
From Friday, June 7th to Wednesday, July 31st, we held an exhibition titled "What is MEL? Let's Connect the Future of the Sea, Fish, and Fish-

Eating Culture" in the lobby of Shufukaikan Plaza F, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo. We introduced the MEL mark and displayed MEL-certified seafood products in a near-real form.

2. *Sea Day Project:*
As part of the Sea Day commemorative event, we set up a booth at the "Sea Day Project in Aomi," held at the Tokyo International Cruise Terminal on Monday, July 15th (a public holiday). The main attractions of the event were tours of an automobile carrier and a Coast Guard survey vessel. The opening ceremony featured speeches by the Minister in Charge of Ocean Policy and the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (with a video message from the Prime Minister). Most of the exhibitors were related to maritime shipping. Surprisingly, many visitors attended, mostly families with children. Since MEL was the only one related to seafood products, our booth attracted a lot of visitors.

3. *Asahi Elementary School Newspaper Summer Navi:*
On Saturday, July 27th, we conducted four one-hour classes titled "Do You Know MEL? What We Can Do Through Marine Eco-label" at the "Asahi Elementary School Newspaper Summer Navi @ Osaka Science & Technology Museum 2024" event. From the video of Sakahiko, the official MEL ambassador, children and their parents enjoyed learning about the AI-

driven management methods at aquaculture sites, which are rarely seen. They could also write down what they learned in the distributed booklets and submit them as summer vacation projects.

4. *MEL Parent-Child Class:*
For the third year, we held two sessions of the Parent-Child Class on Wednesday, August 7th, and Tuesday, August 27th. The children enjoyed drawing and crafts as part of their summer vacation projects, while their parents listened to detailed explanations about MEL certification.

5. *The 26th Japan International Seafood Show:*
Participants in the parent-child fish learning session hosted by the Seafood Consumption Promotion Center engaged in fishing games using illustrations of certified seafood products and shared their impressions at the MEL booth.

This year, many children learned about MEL certification. Because they love fish, they seriously listened to the MEL system as an active approach to creating a better society. We would like to express our gratitude to all the organizers who provided us with so many opportunities.



EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT

The record-breaking late heatwaves persisted day after day. Has the scorching heat

finally taken a break after the Autumn Equinox Day?

On September 13th, I attended Kyodo Senpaku Co., LTD. showcase of fin whales at Toyosu Market. With over 600 attendees, including foreign media, the event's star was the “domestic fin whale for the first time in half a century,” which made a strong impression alongside videos of its processing on the new mother ship, “Kangei Maru.” Whale meat, a traditional part of Japanese food culture, played a crucial role in alleviating post-war hunger and was a common sight on dining tables during the subsequent economic boom. How we interact with it going forward is a serious matter for reflection.

Incidentally, the fin whale samples offered for tasting—tail meat, red meat, and both belly and skin—were all exquisite, allowing a moment of nostalgia.

Despite the many challenges we face, let’s strive to match the global success of Japanese athletes like Shohei Ohtani. I wish everyone good health and continued success.

MEL Certified Products of the month: “Amber” Coho Salmon from Kuji

Certified entities: Kuji City Fisheries Cooperative Association

Marine Eco-Label Japan Council Secretariats

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