



Certified Seafood Collaborative and MEL Council Announce MOU Agreement for Mutual Recognition of Chain of Custody Certifications

The Certified Seafood Collaborative (CSC) and the Marine Eco-Label Japan Council (MEL) have agreed on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for mutual recognition of chain of custody (CoC). Both organizations share the determination to promote international distribution of certified seafood while minimizing the costs associated with those certifications. This partnership enables the utilization of each other's CoCs, eliminating the duplication, with the assured credibility anchored by their GSSI recognitions and ISO based certification frameworks.

Through the mutual recognition, RFM certified products from the United States can be distributed by MEL CoC entities worldwide. Likewise, MEL certified products from Japan can be distributed by RFM CoC entities worldwide. Individual contracts by certified entities with the secondary scheme or its certification body will ensure the integrity of the chain of custody. The scheme logo displayed will ensure that consumers understand which scheme has certified the product in origin.

Both the MEL program and the RFM program are (i) based on the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and FAO Guidelines, (ii) GSSI benchmarked, and (iii) rely on ISO17065 including for the accreditation of certification bodies by IAF member bodies. Both organizations recognize that the above fundamentals are key to the credible, verifiable production and distribution of sustainable seafood, and are committed to fully utilizing the mutual recognition framework for ensuring those fundamentals are maintained.

CSC and MEL are committed a continuing partnership while remaining independent with separate ownership, communications, and funding. We are committed to choice in certification and will not require clients to use each other's certification standards or the mutual recognition created under our agreement. We also are committed to and will strive to satisfy the growing market demand for certified seafood while minimizing audit requirements and expenses.

For questions about the collaboration between MEL and CSC, please contact:

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About MEL

The Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) is the sustainable seafood certification program developed in Japan and adapts to Japan's diverse fisheries, environment, ecosystem and industries. MEL is one of the GSSI-recognized seafood certification schemes, and the only one with standards for both capture fisheries and aquaculture. MEL complies with FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and Eco-Labeling Guidelines to ensure the sustainability of marine resources and the conservation of the environment and ecosystems. MEL aims to contribute to sustainable development of the seafood industry and foster fish-eating culture, as social infrastructure of credible seafood. The MEL Council was established in December 2016 to develop, implement, and own a seafood certification scheme appropriate for Japanese fisheries, aquaculture, seafood production, and markets in accordance with international standards. MEL is headquartered in Uchisaiwaicho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, JAPAN. To learn more, visit <https://melj.jp/eng/>.

About the CSC's RFM Certification Program

The Responsible Fisheries Management (RFM) Certification program is owned by the Certified Seafood Collaborative (CSC), a foundation with a diverse board of seafood and sustainability experts. The RFM Certification program is founded on the strongest and most widely acknowledged international fishery certification standards and practices. The program strive to provide cost efficient, credible wild-capture sustainable seafood certification without charging logo licensing fees. RFM was the first sustainability eco-certification program to be benchmarked and recognized by the Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative (GSSI). To learn more, visit <https://rfmcertification.org/>.