

July 31st 2025

MEL Council

MEL NEWS VOL. 88 (ENGLISH EDITION)

Dear MEL Partners:

In the western Japan after the early rainy season, the intense heat has finally arrived along with the summer sky in the eastern Japan, which had been disturbed. Despite the fact that rainfall was reported to be low nationwide, heavy rain damage caused by linear rainbands occurred frequently in various places.

The news of the local abundant catch of squid and mackerel, which are not fished all over Japan, does not fall smoothly. It seems that the story that saury drift net fishing has been revived for the first time in three years, and that eastern Hokkaido has been boiled by large running saury, was also a temporary topic. Is it possible to only take the whims of the sea as beyond human wisdom?

If the essence of nature is diversity, then aquaculture and agriculture will begin with its limitations. Growing only a limited number of species against the laws of nature is called "artificial nature," and I feel that publications and papers on wisdom and technology to protect "artificial nature" from climate change are gaining momentum in recent years. I remembered the debate about whether people's lives were really enriched by the agricultural life that mankind started more than 10,000 years ago.

1. International Standardization

CSI, which announced the start of action in April, seems to be steadily expanding its actions. Council information such as holding and strengthening the members of the board of directors is coming in. In Japan, a variety of events are being prepared with a focus on the Certified Seafood Forum, "Advancing Responsible Choice in Seafood" (hosted by CSI and co-sponsored by ASMI and GSA).

GSSI's MOCA (Monitoring of Continued Alignment) has been repeatedly exchanged between the secretariats since then. It has been difficult to take a step forward from the theory of principle, and at the same time, I am trying to encourage colleagues (overseas scheme owners) who share the same way of thinking to work together.

2. Certification Validation

This month's certification came into effect for one aquaculture. Fujisan Salmon (formerly Kakishima Trout Farm), which produces rainbow trout at four farms in Shizuoka Prefecture, has been certified.

3. Voice from Certified Entities

In February of this year, Izumi Co., Ltd. obtained MEL CoC certification, and since July has stored products with the MEL logo. We talked to Mr. Yoshimichi Tomokuni, Director of the Fresh Seafood Department who was promoted to obtain MEL certification,

"Providing sustainable seafood and increasing customer awareness and fans through MEL certification"

**Yoshimichi Tomokuni, Director of the Fresh Seafood Department
Fresh Seafood Dept., Food Division, Izumi Co., Ltd.**

Based on our management philosophy of "employees feel pride and joy and continue to contribute to the lives of the community and customers," we are developing supermarkets called "Yume Town" and "Yume Mart" that are close to the community, mainly in western Japan.

In 2021, we set numerical targets and decided on initiatives as our goal of achieving a sustainable society by 2050 as the "youme MIRAI Action." One of its goals is a "society in harmony with nature," and we have announced that we will conserve biodiversity as an initiative. This time, we have come to aim to obtain certification as part of sustainable procurement based on this "youme MIRAI Action".



MEL Certificate Awarding Ceremony

When obtaining certification, we took the time to thoroughly develop manuals to prevent the mixing of certified and non-certified seafood products in the middle, establish an internal system, and disseminate information to employees involved in manufacturing and sales, such as store staff and supervisors who patrol stores.

In February 2025, we obtained the "CoC (Distribution Processing Stage) Certification" for the sixth retail business, and from July

1, we will be selling "MEL certified products" at 95 Yume Town and Yume Mart stores (at the time of the start of sales). As the first step, they sell seared fish made with "Shizuoka Prefecture's pole-and-line fishing straw-grilled bonito" and fillets, sashimi, and sushi with "farmed sudachiburi yellowtail" and "farmed tennoburi yellowtail". In western Japan, customers prefer products from nearby production areas, so stores in the Kyushu area purchase Kyushu buri, and stores in the Honshu area purchase Honshu buri. In the future, we would like to consider expanding the number of fish species such as farmed fish and handling them at group companies.

We supermarkets have stores that have a point of contact with our customers, who are consumers, and we are responsible for purchasing sustainable products from the production site and delivering them to our customers, who are consumers. We believe that our acquisition of the MEL certification CoC (Distribution and Processing Stage) certification will help produce producers secure sales channels and provide customers with the opportunity to choose seafood products produced through responsible fishing and aquaculture.

We will continue to promote MEL certified products through promotional materials and other materials at the sales floor, and contribute to expanding awareness of MEL certification, protecting fish resources, and realizing a sustainable fisheries industry.

Thank you very much, Director of the Friendship Department. I was very pleased to hear that you are putting effort into spreading the word to all employees. If you recall, in February 2019, I was asked about obtaining certification by Mr. Yuya Sugino, a buyer of your company, who stopped by the MEL booth at the Osaka Seafood Show. I am deeply moved that Izumi's certification, which was realized with the passion of General Manager Tomokuni, has spread products with the MEL logo throughout the country. We will continue to promote activities that will be useful to you, so thank you for your support.

4. Column

In order to promote the acquisition of MEL certification by coastal fisheries, we asked Professor Nobuyuki Yagi of the University of Tokyo in May, Associate Professor Yutaro Sakai of the University of Tokyo in June, and Professor Eiji Tanaka of Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology to conclude the series this month.

"Dissemination of MEL Fisheries Management Standard (FMS) certification"

**Professor Emeritus Eiji Tanaka
Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology**



Prof. Eiji Tanaka

In the past, acid rain, which is thought to be the effect of air pollutants, caused the death of forests in mountainous areas and the death of lake organisms. For this reason, environmental issues are a spark that can be worn, and citizens' awareness of the problem is high, and companies are paying attention to citizens' awareness. Mass retailers that handle food began to handle eco-label foods that are environmentally friendly. On the other hand, in Japan, there are no such sensational situations, such as the withering of Mt. Hakone, so the general

public's awareness of the problem is lower than in Europe and the United States.

In Japan, fishers are more interested in sustainable development than the general public, and fishers who use international resources such as bonito tuna are particularly interested. Six of the 25 FMS certifications by MEL are related to bonito tuna, and certification is important for exports to Europe and the United States, where eco-labels are emphasized, and increases the social value of companies. Shirasu (whitebait) has been treated as a certified product in supermarkets in recent years, but there are also six cases, all of which have a motivation to be certified. Of the remaining 13 cases, 9 cases were swirl nets and small bottoms, and there are only 4 coastal fisheries such as shellfish and gillnets, even though there are many organizations that have excellent resource management in coastal fisheries.

In Japan, the spread of FMS certification will also require PR about the effects other than considering environmental issues. For example, the quality of the catch can be improved by resource management, and I think it would be better to promote this point to consumers from the perspective of the spread of FMS certification.

The Pacific halibut fishery is world-famous as a successful example of large-scale resource management, and it is known that this resource management has also improved the quality of catch. In the early stages of resource management, the 1930s and 1960s, TAC management was carried out using the Olympic method, which in turn led to a significant decline in the quality of the catch. At that time, the competition between fishers for first-to-get races intensified, fishing boats became larger, the number of sailing days increased, and when entering the port, the catch was thrown into

the port, and it was immediately loaded with fuel and food and left the port. This early management method was biologically successful but economically a fiasco.

Later, from the reflection of this failure, the individual quota (IQ) system was introduced. If TAC is distributed by fishers, there will be no useless preemptive competition among fishers. After the introduction of the IQ system, in order to avoid price collapses, etc., landing intervals and upper limits on the amount of fish landed at one time were introduced, and the supply was stable, the catch was handled carefully, and the quality was greatly improved. Thus, improving the quality of the catch is one of the by-products of resource management, which is also beneficial for consumers and the distribution industry.

In fact, products that have received MEL FMS certification are high-quality products like Aquaculture Management Standard certification. For example, the Shijimi (Japanese basket clam) beam trawl fishery of the Jyusan Fisheries Cooperative Association in Aomori Prefecture ships medium-sized as well as large *Corbicula japonica* with a shell length of 24 mm or more. If you overfish from a small size, the number of individuals that survive until they grow large will drastically decrease, and you will only be a bean-like swordfish. However, the fisheries cooperative is managing resources such as limiting the catch to 140 kg per person per day and limiting the shell length to 18.5 mm (shell width 12 mm) or more, so it will survive until it becomes an oversized brand with high commercial value (shell length 30~35 mm or more). The catch is sorted by size, and then carefully removed from dead shellfish, making it a high-quality product.

It is also important to consider the economic effects before obtaining certification. The hokke (Okhotsk Atka mackerel) gillnet fishery of the Rirei Fisheries Eco-Label Promotion Council catches the northern Hokkaido stock of hokke, but efforts to manage the resources have paid off, and the overall resource is recovering. In addition, individuals over 2 years old (body length of about 25 cm or more) are distributed as high-value fresh food rather than feed or processed raw materials, but when comparing the total catch in the last five years (2019-2023) and 10 years ago (2009-2013), the proportion of the total catch increased from 37% to 62% by weight. If a certain amount of large fish can be secured every year, a stable supply is possible like farmed fish, which is advantageous for trade. In fact, efforts are being implemented to process dried fish and expand sales channels nationwide as a safe, secure, and high-quality food. Even if the catch is MEL certified, coastal fishers are generally not good at selling, and intermediary with the vendors will be important for the spread and continuation of the certification.

Improving quality through resource management should not only improve the size of the caught fishes, but also improve the freshness of the catch. If large-scale catches are revised and the damage to fish bodies is reduced and the decline in freshness is delayed,

there is a possibility that all or part of the catch that was intended for processing will fall into the hands of consumers as fresh seafood. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that can objectively show an improvement in freshness based on the K value, and I would like to ask the relevant agencies to investigate.

In the future, I think that development and support that takes into account not only environmental friendliness but also incidental effects will be necessary for the dissemination and continuation of MEL FMS certification.

Thank you very much, Prof. Tanaka. I have received various guidance from the time of the old MEL, but as the new MEL has become an international scheme recognized by GSSI and the quality of activities is required, I will do my best to work together with all related parties, so please continue to support us.

5. MEL Auditors' Training

On July 17-18, we held the first MEL Auditors' Training (CPD: Continuing Professional Development) this year. Eight people who have auditing qualifications and two observers from the accreditation organization JAB participated.

New certification standards have come into effect for both capture fisheries and aquaculture, and the CoC is about to be deliberated by the standards committee, so I think it was a good time for the auditors. The professors who served as lecturers were also aware of the new standards, and I believe that everyone who took the course understood better.

6. Events

Seafood Legacy Co., Ltd. held a party to commemorate the 10th anniversary of its founding. It was a great event for President Hanaoka and everyone involved in the creation of the sustainable seafood movement. I would like to express my respect to everyone who has practiced the path of "from one lamp to ten thousand lights" and wish them further success.

We exhibited at the "Ocean Day Project 2025" organized by the Headquarters for Ocean Policy, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, and the Japan



海の日プロジェクト2025 左：たくさんの子どもたちにMELの紹介をしているところ
右：船内を見学できる内航用練習船の「大成丸」

Foundation on July 21. It was an event representing Japan, a maritime country, and there were many families during the summer vacation, so it was a good opportunity to introduce MEL.

On July 30 and August 8, we will hold the "MEL Summer Vacation Parent-Child Class". Although it is a small event handmade by the secretariat, I feel that the participating mothers learn about MEL and that the value of doing and the circle gradually expanding as long as they see the sparkle in their children's eyes.

▶ [MEL Parent-Child Classroom](#)

For the August and September events, we are looking for MEL-certified seafood products, posters, and flyers until July 31st.

▶ [Application for certified seafood exhibition](#)

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EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT

The number of foreign tourists visiting Japan increased to 21.5 million from January to June, according to the National Tourism Organization. It is reported that inbound consumption is also changing from branded products to nearest products and "things." I feel that the spread and depth of information through SNS are leading to more established consumption. On the other hand, exports to the United States in June were announced to decrease by 11%, and the impact of tariffs seems to be gradually taking effect.

Appointments of senior officials of the Fisheries Agency of Japan were carried out on July 1. I wish Director-General Hitoshi Fujita and everyone else in the new system every success. In charge of MEL, the Director-General of Fisheries Policy Planning Department has been replaced by Mr. Hiromichi Takahashi, and the Director of Fisheries Processing Industries and Marketing Division has been replaced by Ms. Hiroko Kuno. As there are signs of change in the world's fisheries eco-labels, we ask for your continued guidance and support.

*MEL Certified Products of the month: Salted Wakame Seaweed
Certified entities: Taro-cho Fisheries Cooperative Association*

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