



# MEL NEWS

MEL certified products ▶



October 31st, 2025

*MEL Council*

## **MEL NEWS VOL. 91 (ENGLISH EDITION)**

*Dear MEL Partners:*

*Autumn is deepening in Japan and the world with political, economic, and social instability. The word "division" suggests that no matter who the proponents and bearers of the various frameworks are, it will not be easy to calm the current torrent.*

*By the way, according to the "Democracy Report 2025" by the V-Dem Institute in Sweden, as of the end of 2024, there were 88 democracies and 91 dictatorships.*

### **1. International standardization**

*This month, TSSS 2025, which was linked to the Osaka-Kansai Expo in the first half of the month, and in the fourth week, many industry attendees gathered in Tokyo, including the CSI Forum, ASMI Reception, IFFO Annual Meeting, and GFF Annual Meeting.*

*In the midst of such an overcrowded schedule, GSSI announced the resignation of its Executive Director (CEO), Øyvind Ihle. It is reported that the reason is poor health, but due to this confusion, MEL's MOCA, which was supposed to be approved within last month, was unfortunately postponed. I am concerned that the function of the CEO, which is the center of work, will be dysfunctional.*

*The MEL Council exchanged views on the possibility of collaboration with MarinTrust on the introduction of the compound feed certification standard and fishmeal and fish oil certification standard currently being prepared by MEL. With CSI, which was launched in April, we have finalized the transition to CSI of the mutual recognition of CoC certification that MEL had concluded with CSC. Although the direction of both sides has not deviated significantly, we have decided to continue to consider specific points at the stage where further discussion is needed.*

*As a MEL Council, we will have many issues, but we will proceed in a way that does not make mistakes.*

### **2. Certification Validation**

*This month's certifications came into effect with 2 aquaculture certifications and 1 CoC certification. The cumulative total is 285 fisheries, 75 aquaculture, and 185 CoC certifications.*

### 3. Report from the certification holder

*This month, Kosuke Miyata of Daito Refrigeration Co., Ltd., which is engaged in sea bream farming in Kochi Prefecture, shared his thoughts.*

#### **"The 'sense of security' of 'certification'"**

##### **Daito Reizo Co., Ltd. Kosuke Miyata**

Our company makes a living in the cold storage business, but in the past, we froze small fish landed in the nearby sea and sold them to aquaculture fishermen as "live bait". Due to the trend of the times, "compound feed" is now the main focus, but we are still involved in the sale of aquaculture feed.

However, in recent years, due to aging and lack of successors, we have seen the closure of our customers, aquaculture companies, and we thought that we could not continue like this, so with the cooperation of Kochi Prefecture, we founded our own red sea bream farming in Uranouchi Bay and Nomi Bay, Susaki City, and have continued to this day.



**Daito Reizo's Fishing Ground in Uranouchi Bay, Susaki-shi**



**Daito Reizo's Red Sea Bream**

The reason why we decided to obtain MEL aquaculture certification was triggered by a request from a business partner. We were told about selling MEL farmed certified fish in Japan, and although there have been various journeys from there, we were able to successfully obtain certification as of December 2024. At that time, I have nothing but gratitude to everyone in the field and the aquaculturists for their great cooperation.

Currently, our MEL farmed certified fish are mainly shipped live fish mainly from the area. We have been operating a seafood processing plant since October 2014, and we process a wide range of red sea bream, including fillets, loin, portion cuts, and slices. We hope to be able to provide these processed products to everyone as MEL-certified seafood products, and we are working to obtain CoC certification in the near future.

Currently, certified seafood products are one of the most important items in overseas

markets. Some buyers say, "I can't convince customers unless it has added value such as certification." The reason for this is a "sense of security" that certification is attached. There are overseas buyers who want to buy good things if they buy something from Japan anyway, but how do you guarantee that "good thing"? It is quite difficult to say "how to prove it" when it comes to how much a salesperson claims to be safe and secure.

In such a situation, I believe that certification that is evaluated from a third-party perspective will come into play.

We have not yet started exporting using MEL certification, but we would like to work such initiatives in the future.

We also hope to help MEL certification become widely recognized overseas.

*Thank you very much, Mr. Miyata. We hope that you will make great use of MEL certification for sales in overseas markets, which will surely be worked on in the near future.*

#### **4. Column of the person involved**

*The third installment of the Mr. Inui's series was a valuable suggestion to the MEL Council, backed by long-term field activities by Mr. Inui.*

#### **"Proposals for a New Perspective on MEL"**

**Masahide Inui (Senior Advisor, Suidosha Co., Ltd.)**

Among the three certification areas of MEL, fisheries certification is the least with 25 cases. Of these, 11 were in the coastal fisheries sector (excluding 2 freshwater and brackish water), with 6 boat trawls, 2 bottom trawls, 2 gillnets, and 1 set net. By fish species, there are 6 pelagic fish and 3 other fish stocks, and there are only two species of coastal sedentary resources: Sakhalin surf clam and Japanese glass shrimp.

MEL certifies "producers who are sustainable and environmentally conscious of fishery resources," and this concept is easy to understand in the fields of aquaculture and distribution and processing. However, as seen in the previous issue, the sedentary resources in coastal areas (shellfish, crustaceans, cephalopods, Japanese sand lance and Chum salmon in coastal areas, as pointed out in the previous issue) are almost all declining. Conversely, fishery resources that are not sustainably stable are less likely to be subject to MEL certification. Therefore, it is natural that there are almost no certifications in the field of fishery certification, especially in the local resources of coastal fisheries.

However, in order to realize the slogans of MEL, which are "Let's connect to the future, the sea, fish, and fish-eating culture" and "Bringing the blessings of Japan's rich seas to the world," it is important to revitalize and revive coastal fisheries, which are currently

in a state of poverty. Rather than endorsing the status quo, my suggestion is that supporting efforts to revitalize coastal fisheries for the future can be another pillar of certification.

During his active career, the author investigated many cases of sustainable use of marine resources through resource management, and worked hard to disseminate the idea that we should be learned from advanced examples in many fishing village areas. However, today's situation makes us realize that these efforts by fishers to manage resources are completely powerless against man-made and natural environmental changes.

For example, the resource management of abalone in Ojika Town, Nagasaki Prefecture and the resource management of squid in Ise and Mikawa Bay were called "honor students" in resource management at the time. However, at present, abalone production in Ojika-cho is zero, and it has been 10 years since the fishing of Japanese sand lance in Ise and Mikawa Bay has already been banned.

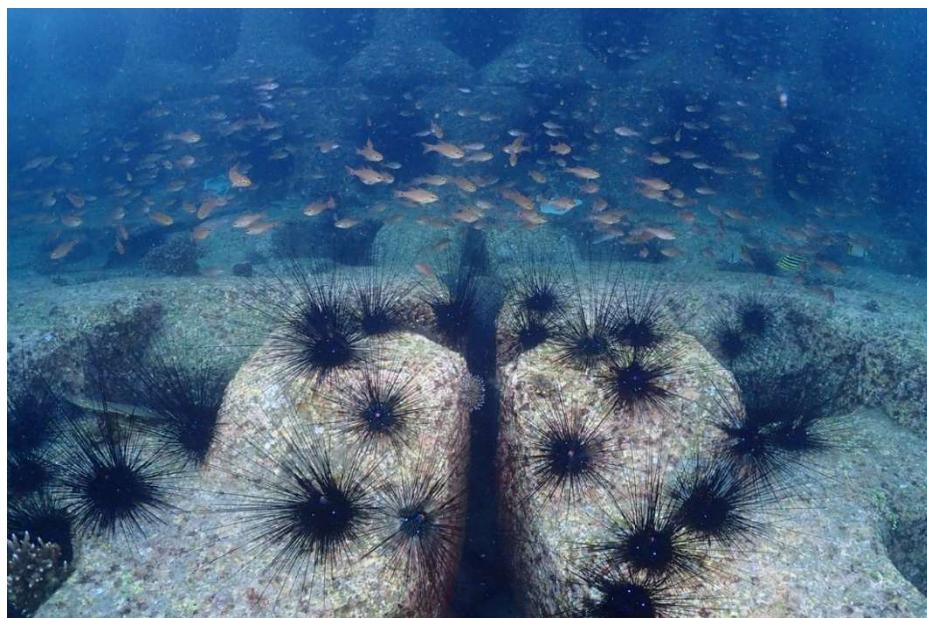
The factors that hinder the sustainability of fishery resources can be broadly divided into problems faced by the producers themselves (overfishing, etc.) and changes in the external environment and ecosystem that are far beyond the hands of the producers themselves. The above-mentioned facts only show that resource management (fisheries management) is difficult to achieve sustainable use of resources. Although there are quite a few experts who lump the decline in production into "overfishing" by fishers, the unilateral decline in coastal fishery production is overwhelmingly due to external factors such as changes in ecosystems and environmental factors. The factors that have led to the decline of coastal fishery resources shown in the previous issue are the disappearance of seaweed beds, the disappearance of tidal flats and shallow waters, the disappearance of brackish water bodies, the collection of sea sand, the inhibition of sand inflow into the sea by river artifacts, the upstream impairment of anadromous fish, the management of nutrients, the influx of pesticides, food damage such as cormorants and Naru eagle rays (changes in ecosystems), and the recent rise in water temperature (global warming).

Global warming cannot be controlled by human hands and can only be accepted, but other factors can be overcome to some extent through human involvement. Of these, the role of the government is to create tidal flats and shallow waters, remove river structures, create rivers where fish can swim, manage nutrients, and regulate pesticides, but there are also measures that can be realized through cooperation between fishers, consumers, and companies.

Let me give you an example. In order to regenerate seaweed beds, it is necessary to actively catch algae-eating fish and reduce food pressure. However, algae-eating fish

such as rabbit fish and lowfin drummer, even though they are delicious fish when eaten, have been hindered from distribution due to reasons such as (1) the internal organs smell, (2) the dorsal fin is poisonous in the case of sea bream, and (3) they are not familiar and do not know how to eat them. As a result, the amount of resources is not reduced, and the large seaweed that has sprouted is eaten from one end to the other, and disappearance of seaweed beds is fixed. The solution to this problem is to actively catch algae-eating fish and distribute them as food. If seaweed beds are regenerated, resources such as abalones, small abalones (tokobushi), and sea urchins will also be restored, and it will also bring good news to seaweed farming, which is suffering from food damage.

It is envisioned as a new field to certify fishermen, processors, distributors, restaurants, etc. who engage in such activities and seek public understanding. I hope that MEL will create new innovations and continue to develop towards the revitalization of coastal fish fisheries.



**Disappearance of algae damaged by long-spined sea urchins and half-lined cardinalfish: (Provided by: Ainan-cho)**

*Mr. Inui, thank you very much for the valuable comments and suggestions you have given me over the three occasions for MEL management. I would like to share it with everyone involved and use it. Thank you for your continued support.*

##### **5. Responsible Seafood Procurement Roundtable Launched**

The part of the "Food System Act (Act on Promotion of Business Activities by Food

Businesses to Realize the Sustainable Supply of Food and Other Goods and the Optimization of Food Transactions," which was one of the priority national measures, came into effect on October 1 (the remaining optimization part is scheduled to come into effect on April 1 next year). In line with this, the government has established the "Food System Sustainability Issue Solving Platform" and will work together with the public and private sectors.

On October 2, Seafood Legacy announced the launch of the "The Japan Responsible Seafood Roundtable," in which leading seafood-related companies in Japan participate.

The participating companies are Kyokuyo, Seven & i HDS, Nichirei, Nissui, Maruha Nichiro, Marubeni Seafoods, and Mitsubishi Corporation, as well as seven companies and the secretariat by Seafood Legacy.



#### Priority issues of the initiative

- ①Human Rights Due Diligence
- ②Environmental due diligence
- ③Implementation of transparent traceability

The Roundtable will start its activities in October, starting with information sharing and collaboration, gradually expanding the circle of activities, aiming to create a common guide by 2026, and inviting more companies and stakeholders to participate. This event reminds us that food sustainability and proper

distribution are spreading in all directions as a national initiative.

#### 6. CSI Forum Held

On October 20th, a forum was held hosted by CSI (Certified Seafood International) and co-sponsored by ASMI and GSA (Global Seafood Organization: BAP). There were speakers from all over the world, and it was a grand event with an awareness of Japan, which is an important market for Alaskan seafood.

Four companies in Japan have already obtained CSI CoC certification, and the Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU) has reported that it is actively handling certified products.

From materials distributed on the forum

After the forum, the CSI group energetically explained to the Fisheries Agency and other related parties, and seemed to feel a sense of response.

Of the eight countries that have agreed to participate in the CSI, except for the United States, which has already completed the transition, the situation in seven countries seems to be progressing in obtaining certification on a fishery basis, although the industrial circumstances of each country are different. He explained that the principle of obtaining CSI certification is only for the fishery unit, and that he intends to promote the sustainable use of seafood products at the lowest possible cost in cooperation with schemes approved by GSSI, such as the RFM program (MEL is also a partner).

## 7. MEL Auditors Training Session

This year's MEL New Auditors Training Workshop was held from October 14th to 16th. Since it was a face-to-face training session at the Technofer venue, all 11 participants, including the observers, took the course seriously. In the new era of fisheries eco-labels, auditors training is becoming increasingly important in responding to diverse demands from the society, and we believe that this training session was a fulfilling one.

## 8. Events

From October 6th to 10th, we exhibited at the annual Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries "Consumer Room". It is a place for public-private collaboration where exhibitions and products are introduced, from the expansion of seafood product consumption linked to "Sakana No Hi (Day of Fish)" to the fisheries eco-label. This year, a report on efforts related to the Noto Peninsula earthquake reconstruction was added, and it was a grand event attended by Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Takinami, members of the Diet, and Director-General of the Fisheries Agency Fujita.



**Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Takinami receiving an explanation from Secretary General Kato**

*Kyushu still has midsummer, Hokkaido has the first snow, and the Japan archipelago is diverse. According to a survey, "foods that make you feel autumn" are ① saury, ② salmon, and ③ returning skipjack, but although there are strong catches for saury, both autumn salmon and skipjack are in a tough situation. The screams of the people involved pierce my heart.*

*Globally, ICES's recommendation to drastically reduce the 2026 catch quota for Atlantic mackerel in the northeast Atlantic, and the final assessment announcement by the Washington Convention Secretariat to "recommend adoption" of regulations for all eel species proposed by the EU are shaking business. While this has shown some of the difficulty for the world to align with both producing and consuming countries, it remains to be seen how scientific recommendations and political consensus among governments with industries will progress.*

*It looks like autumn is going to progress all at once. Please pay attention to your physical condition.*

*MEL Certified Products of the month: Boiled Whitebait (Shirasu)*

*Certified entities: Marukai Co., Ltd.*

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