



MARINE ECOLABEL JAPAN (MEL V2) – MONITORING OF CONTINUED ALIGNMENT

Marine Ecolabel Japan (MEL V2) obtained GSSI recognition on the December 12, 2019, for its Aquaculture Management System (version 1.0, 2018) and Fisheries Management System (version 2.0, 2018). The scheme was compared against Section A (Governance), Section B (Operational Management), Section C (Aquaculture) and Section D (Fisheries) of the GSSI Global Benchmark Tool (Version 1.0, 2016).

In December 2020, one year after initial recognition, GSSI's Monitoring of Continued Alignment (MOCA) procedure began which comprises a review of any changes in the Scheme's ownership, management, or the standard itself. The Independent Experts found that the MEL Aquaculture Management System (version 1.0, 2018) and Fisheries Management System (version 2.0, 2018) continues to be in alignment with all GSSI Essential Components. The Benchmark Committee therefore recommended continued recognition; a decision approved by the GSSI Steering Board.

As part of the MEL MOCA process, a 30-day Public Consultation was held. Two stakeholders provided a total of 15 comments. The Response Letters to their comments are published on MEL's page on the GSSI website.

ABOUT THE MOCA PROCESS

The GSSI Monitoring of Continued Alignment (MOCA) process is carried out on a three-year cycle (alternating with the full re-assessment). It starts with a self-assessment by the Scheme Owner, followed by a report to GSSI indicating any changes in the Scheme Ownership, Scheme Management, or the Standard itself. With the report, the Independent Experts (IEs) conduct a Desktop Review to provide a recommendation on the continued alignment of the scheme. During the MOCA process, the IEs focus on two main parts to conclude whether the scheme continues to be in alignment with the GSSI Benchmark Tool and can maintain its recognition:

- A. Identification of substantive changes in the reference documents since the recognition to determine if the scheme is still in alignment with all Essential Components of the Benchmark Tool.
- B. Verification of continued evidence of implementation.

The recommendation by the IEs is presented to the members of the Benchmark Committee (BC) for review. Following review by the Benchmark Committee, a notification is sent to the Board and a public announcement is made.



ABOUT THE GSSI BENCHMARKING PROCESS

GSSI's Global Benchmark Tool provides formal recognition of seafood certification schemes that successfully complete a rigorous and transparent benchmark process, underpinned by the FAO Guidelines. The Tool's 7-step Benchmark Process is voluntary and designed to be independent, impartial and transparent. The expert-led process involves objective assessments made against performance areas covering scheme governance, operational management (including chain of custody) and standards for aquaculture and fisheries certification. Once a scheme has gone through the Benchmark Process and is found in alignment with the 186 Essential Components, it will be publicly recognized by GSSI and the Benchmark Report will be made available on the GSSI website: www.ourgssi.org.

ABOUT MEL

Marine Eco-Label Japan was launched as a project operated by the Japan Fisheries Association in 2007. In December 2016, the MEL Council was established and became the scheme owner in response to the growing public interest in marine eco-labeling within and outside Japan. The scheme consists of three standards of fisheries, aquaculture and chain of custody (CoC). As of end of October 2021, there were 147 cases certified: fisheries 11, aquaculture 49 and CoC 87. Visit <http://www.melj.jp/> for more information.