POTENTIAL OF MARINE ECO-LABEL

I. BACKGROUND

Marine eco-label is a certification scheme recently spreading globally as a tool to prove efforts for resource management and environmental consideration. In particular, acquisition of such certification has become one of the commercial terms especially in Europe and the United States. Such trends would continue and expand thereafter. Thus, it is important to promote marine products produced through sustainable fisheries and aquaculture systems.

II. Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL)

There are various types of marine eco-labels in the world. Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) is one of them. There is a variety of fish species, catching methods, fish dishes and fishery-related industries in Japan and these are deeply linked with local communities and societies. MEL features such diversity of fisheries and supports taking actions to preserve our oceans, fish stocks and seafood culture for future generations.

It is beneficial that appropriate resource management in fishing areas leads to increased catches and incomes of fishermen in Southeast Asia countries. Marine eco-label is not an initiative to promote resource management itself. However, it leads to the appropriate utilization of marine resources through sustainable fisheries and aquaculture implementation. In the future, in order to mitigate impact of changes in the marine environment, the acquisition of eco-label as a policy measure will steer fisheries and aquaculture sectors in Southeast Asia countries toward more sustainable industries.

The Fisheries Agency of Japan (FAJ) considers that introducing an idea of MEL to the other SEAFDEC members is meaningful because the Southeast Asian region has a rich diversity of fishing industries and seafood culture. At that time, if requested, FAJ is willing to provide information about the procedure of MEL's acquisition of international certification.

III. EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The expected outputs from efforts to popularize the Eco-Label are as follows:

1) Each country can understand the reason why acquisition of marine eco-label is one of measures for achieving the SDGs.
2) Gaining an eco-label will lead to an increase of business opportunities.
3) From a public interest perspective, practicing marine eco-label initiative will enhance the level of fishery competitiveness without obtaining certification.
4) It can also be used as a benchmark when devising policies in each country.

IV. SUGGESTION FROM JAPAN

FAJ has focused on promoting marine eco-label as a tool for revitalization of fishing industries, and we continue improving eco-labels’ quality that matches the actual condition of the fisheries.

If your government or counterpart would consider basic plans for building a marine eco-label scheme in order to boost fishing and fishing processing industries, FAJ would be happy to share our experience and to cooperate with you about strategic planning. In Southeast Asian countries where the
fishery environment is similar to Japan to some extent, MEL will be one of prominent components for your strategic planning about marine eco-label.

If interested, FAJ would like to start discussions about the importance and usefulness of the marine eco-label for your fisheries policy and we would also like to cooperate in creating an Asian standard in order to sustain a wide variety of fisheries - mainly coastal fisheries.