



Japan's First ASC Certified Coho Salmon Enters Retail and E-Commerce Market

Tokyo, Japan (June, 25, 2020)

Marukin Co., Ltd., owner and operator of a coho salmon farm in Onagawa, Miyagi prefecture in Northeast Japan that launched Miyagi Onagawa Coho Salmon Aquaculture Improvement Project (AIP) in 2017 with Ocean Outcomes Japan Program (which has since merged with Seafood Legacy) and local fishermen association Fisherman Japan, became the first coho salmon farm in Japan to acquire Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) certification.

Aiming for a More Responsible Aquaculture: Japan's First AIP-to-ASC Certification

Marukin launched Japan's first AIP in 2017. AIPs are collaborative efforts between multiple stakeholders including producers, distributors, NGOs with the purpose of improving the responsibility of aquaculture operations.

Marukin is regarded as a pioneer in the industry with their current President, Kinichiro Suzuki was first to successfully commercialize coho salmon aquaculture in 1977. Since then, the company diversified its business by integrating processing and distribution operations in addition to its salmon farms but the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and subsequent tsunami swept away their entire facility. As Marukin rebuilt they also took efforts to strengthen their company by transitioning to a more responsible aquaculture, thus leading to the launch of their AIP with the goal of acquiring ASC certification.



In order to obtain ASC certification, Marukin made various improvements to meet ASC salmon standard, including environmental impacts to surrounding ecosystems and habitats, sustainability of salmon feed and smolt, management of diseases and parasites and company wide policies addressing social responsibility.

Shingo Suzuki, Managing Director of Marukin comments, "I am very grateful for our many partner organizations and businesses because this achievement wouldn't have been possible without their support. I hope our efforts can motivate other seafood farmers throughout Japan to take on similar endeavors because demand for environmentally friendly farm-raised seafood will continue to rise as wild caught production decreases."

Shunji Murakami, current Vice President of Seafood Legacy who previously served as Director of Ocean Outcomes Japan Program before the merger, has been working with Marukin since before the AIP started. "Achieving ASC certification and further contributing to SDG goals after three years of AIP is a proud moment for Marukin, especially as demand for domestically sourced seafood has increased recently due to the effects of COVID-19 on global seafood trade. I hope this wonderful news will help foster a society in which sourcing of ASC-certified and AIP-sourced products as well as companies that work hand-in-hand with producers to improve sustainability of seafood production continue to increase," states Murakami.

Koji Yamamoto, General Manager of ASC Japan adds: “I am delighted to welcome Marukin to the ASC programme. Currently more than 40% of global farmed salmon by volume are already ASC certified, but limited certified volume originated from Japan to date. It is exciting to have the first ASC coho salmon farm in Japan, and I hope that this achievement by Marukin will bring further growth to their business, and also serve as an example for responsible coho salmon farming.”

ASC Coho Salmon Available at Select AEON and AEON Retail Branches from June 26th

Japan’s first ASC certified coho salmon will be available at approximately 90 AEON Co., Ltd. and AEON Retail Co., Ltd. stores in the Kanto (Tokyo, Chiba and Kanagawa prefectures) and Tohoku regions starting June 26th, 2020.

AEON has been promoting sales of sustainable seafood since 2006 when it started handling seafood products with Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification. Currently they sell 21 MSC-labeled products from 12 wild caught species. It also sells 43 ASC-labeled products from 25 farmed species.

The ASC eco-label assures consumers that Marukin’s coho salmon are raised using sustainable feed and smolt, with a socially responsible farm operation that minimizes impacts to the surrounding habitat and ecosystem. In addition, Marukin has a robust traceability system in place that ensures transparency of its production and processing operations. Their coho salmon are shipped within a couple hours after landing, enabling customers to enjoy them as fresh as possible.

Raising Consumer Awareness Through Online Sales and Promotional Campaigns

“I hope more people in Japan can get to know about sustainable seafood through our ASC certified coho salmon and become our partners in creating a new seafood industry that will continue to thrive into the future,” says Shingo Suzuki, managing director of Marukin and a board member for Fisherman Japan, a fishery organization based in Ishinomaki, Miyagi prefecture formed by young local fishermen. In light of Marukin achieving ASC certification, Fisherman Japan has announced new promotional campaigns designed to raise consumer awareness regarding seafood sustainability, while also reaffirming Fisherman Japan’s commitment to achieve United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #14 “Life Below Water”.

Fisherman Japan’s promotional campaigns include selling Marukin’s ASC certified coho salmon through E-commerce, partnering with online media platforms to promote ASC coho salmon, and planning of events to promote the newly certified coho salmon at Fisherman Japan-operated seafood restaurant “Uotaniya” in Tokyo.



About Seafood Legacy. <https://seafoodlegacy.com/english/>

Seafood Legacy Co., Ltd. is a social venture based in Tokyo which provides sustainable seafood consulting and platforming services to Japanese fishery, seafood businesses and government. Seafood is a symbol of the connections between marine ecosystems, marine economics, and regional communities, and our purpose is to ensure that it remains abundant for future generations. Seafood Legacy also strategically networks seafood businesses and NGOs to foster pre-competitive platform to solve mutual issues that various stakeholders face in Japan and the world.

About Marukin Co., Ltd. <https://www.kaki-marukin.com/>

Marukin is an aquaculture producer and processing company located in Onagawa, Miyagi prefecture in Northeast Japan that mainly raises coho salmon, oysters and scallops. They have been promoting their Coho Salmon products under its brand name, "Gin-ou (Silver King)" while embodying a transparent distribution system in which their products can be identified by their producers. Such activities are introduced by the Reconstruction Agency as a best practice of companies affected by the earthquake during the reconstruction project. Faced with various issues in regard to stock management and fishermen aging and decreasing in number, Marukin has been working on international-level improvements with a view to becoming a sustainable industry.

About Fisherman Japan. <http://fishermanjapan.com/>

Fisherman Japan's aim is to pass on the fishing culture and industry to the next generation by changing the stereotypical images of fishing to the 3Ks- Kakkoi (cool), Kasegeru (profitable) and Kakushin-teki (innovative). Join our cross-boundary team led by the young fishermen of Sanriku and rise to the challenge of changing the fishing industry of Japan and the world!

About ASC Japan <https://www.asc-aqua.org/>

ASC (Aquaculture Stewardship Council) is an international certification program for environmentally and socially responsible aquaculture products. Chain of Custody (CoC) ensures that ASC certified seafood is traceable through each step in the supply chain back to the certified farm (CoC is common program with MSC). With the ASC logo on the packaging, consumers receive confirmation that they are purchasing responsibly produced seafood.

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