



Surefish

The Seafood Quality Specialists

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Alaska Pollock Draft Report on MSC Certification Released



It's been nearly three years, but it's finally here! The official Draft Report for the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands area was published on September 26, with the draft report for the Gulf of Alaska fishery expected to follow soon thereafter. While the Draft Report does recommend that the fishery be certified as sustainable under the MSC standards, the publication is not the final step by any means. Now that the Draft Report has been released, it will be posted on the MSC's website with an invitation for comment for at least 30 days. After this 30 day period, the certification body (not the MSC) will consider the comments and the report of the peer review panel, and has another 30 days to make a final Determination on the fishery's status. This Final Report with the Determination will then be posted on the MSC website for 21 days. During this time, any party previously providing input in to the assessment can lodge an "Intent to Submit an Objection". If no such intent is lodged during these three weeks, the Determination becomes the final result (if positive, that means the fishery is officially certified!). If, however, an intent is lodged, there is a whole other series of steps. The MSC and the certification body have five days to acknowledge receipt of the intent. Then the party filing the intent has 30 days to send a detailed objection to the MSC and the certification body. The certification body has 30 days to respond. The process ends if the objecting party is satisfied with the response; if not, they have 14 days to file another objection with the MSC. The MSC again has 5 days to acknowledge the second objection. If they don't reject the objection, they have 21 days to announce that they are considering it, and then an objections panel will be established. The objecting party would be informed of the panel members, the date(s) it would convene, and the process which follows.

So even though the Draft Report has been issued, it would still be a minimum of 81 days after September 26 before the fishery could become officially certified, and maybe longer depending upon the objections.

Other fisheries undergoing MSC Chain of Custody assessment:

- Alaska Halibut and Sablefish
- British Columbia Salmon
- Chilean Hake
- Mexican Baja California Spiny Lobster
- North Sea Herring
- South African Hake
- South Georgia Toothfish



Surefish Training:

- Surefish offers FDA Required HACCP Training

HACCP Class Schedule:

- October 9-10, 2003
- December 11-12, 2003

- Please contact us for more details at 206-284-2686 or at surefish@surefish.com

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West Coast
Seafood Show
Booth #911

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Check out our website:
www.surefish.com

Surefish Quality News

The Seafood Quality Specialists

Fall 2003 Issue

Whole Foods Market Commitment to Seafood Sustainability

- Bart Cox

Consumption of seafood is increasing steadily as the public becomes more aware of its health benefits and appealing flavor. At the same time, more than half of the world's marine stocks are depleting at alarming rates due to overfishing and harvesting practices that damage the environment. To help keep seafood plentiful for future generations and to preserve our oceans, Whole Foods Market feels it is critical that we all act now.

Whole Foods Market, the largest retailer of natural and organic food in the US, has brought together Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute, Chefs Collaborative, Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and World Wildlife Fund, to form the Fish For Our Future coalition to direct consumers to make the best environmental choices when purchasing seafood. Eco-friendly selections will, in the long run, encourage fisheries to adopt sustainable fishing practices that maintain healthy and diverse seafood populations for future generations to enjoy.

Whole Foods Market wants to be able to continue long-term to provide their customers with fish to buy. The same time, they want to support ecological health and the abundance of marine life. Whole Foods Market believes the Marine Stewardship Council's "Fish Forever" certified sustainably managed seafood program accomplishes both.

Whole Foods Market started in 1980 as one small store in Austin, Texas, Whole Foods

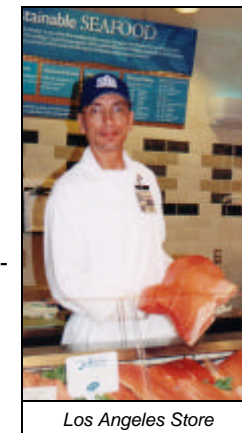
Market has 145 stores in North America.

Alarmed by recent evidence that overfishing is a more serious problem than once thought, Whole Foods Market has announced it will fund the Marine Stewardship Council's (MSC) new initiative: "Whole Foods Market Americas Fisheries Initiative," aimed at increasing the number of certified sustainable fisheries in the United States and throughout all of the Americas. Currently, seven fisheries have been certified under the MSC's international program for sustainable and well-managed fisheries. Wild Alaska Salmon was the first North American seafood species to earn the seal of approval from the MSC.

Catch levels of MSC-certified seafood are monitored by a third party certifier, as are the age and gender of the fish being caught, this helps to maintain population levels and appropriate reproductive capacity.

For the "Whole Foods Market Americas Fisheries Initiative," the MSC has identified nine of the most important seafood products in the U.S. market to target over the next three years. These include: cold water prawns (shrimp), warm water prawns, cod, pollock, crab, mackerel, herring, hake and tuna.

Whole Foods Market was the first retail chain in the United States to earn the Marine Stewardship Council's Chain of Custody certification by Surefish. As part of this certification, over the past two years Surefish has audited many Whole Foods Market facilities and stores throughout the US and continually find them to be committed to the MSC program and have found them to consistently show high regard for a quality seafood product.



Los Angeles Store

President's Piece Alaska Quality Seafood Program

Lisa Goche' - President

The Alaska Quality Seafood program for the salmon season has nearly come to an end. As previously reported we had 5 regions this year, with some in their first year, and some in their second. Overall the project was a great success, with more regions and more than double the number of fishermen and plants participating.

Another interesting fact is that 2003 involved a much broader range of products and species compared to last year. In 2002, Surefish inspected, and certified, under AQS predominantly fresh and frozen H&G. This year a large percentage of the volume was composed of PBO and PBI fillets, as well as PBO portions. Pink and Coho were also incorporated for the first time.

Though the final numbers are not in yet due to some remaining fall production, the total certified, finished pound-

age this year is in excess of 250,000 lbs so far. In the end it will be about triple of last year. A great accomplishment for participants, particularly when one considers how much of it was made up of lower-yield value-added products.

As mentioned in the Summer Issue, Surefish is working with Alaska Manufacturer's Association and groups of fishermen and processors to develop AQS for other species, including halibut, crab and black cod.

If you are interested in AQS, or how Surefish, Seafood Quality Specialists can assist you in development of a quality system for your own operation, please contact me at any time at (206) 284-2686 or lisa@surefish.com.



Shrimp and Count per Pound

- Mark Neely

Shrimp products are usually produced and sold as a commodity in count per pound ranges. Depending on the product form the size range could be as low as "Under 12" per pound (U/12), or listed as a count range such as 41/50 per pound, or if very small they could be listed as high as 500/up per pound. In general, the larger the shrimp size (the lower the count), the more value it has. This could give an unscrupulous producer the incentive to pack a smaller size shrimp and "bump up" the size of the count by various methods.

So, how would a producer do this and how can you detect it? The answer to the second question is by using Surefish, of course!

Methods that a producer can use to make the shrimp count appear larger include the following:

- 1) Phosphates: By abusing phosphates, treated shrimp can soak up and retain water, increasing the weight of each shrimp.
- 2) Throat meat: Processors can gain a 2 to 3 percent yield by not removing the meat that extends into the head of the shrimp. Throat meat can be undesirable because many times it still retains parts of the organs from the head area or may have a darker pigmentation than the rest of the meat, making it unappealing to the consumer. Additionally, if the shrimp is to be battered or breaded, the coating will stick to the throat meat but when cooked, the meat will shrink, leaving a hollow end of batter and or breading on the finished product.
- 3) Uniformity of Weight: This is the ratio of 10% of the largest shrimp by weight and 10% of the smallest shrimp by weight in a sample unit. A proper uniformity of weight ratio should be less than 1.50, meaning



the largest shrimp should not be any bigger than 1.5 times that of the smallest shrimp. This is very important to restaurants, as they would not want one customer to get a plate of large shrimp while the customer sitting next to them notices that their shrimp are half the size. A processor could add some large shrimp to a

pack of mostly small shrimp to increase the count per pound and increase their profit.

How does one obtain the true count per pound? Did I already mention, by using Surefish? This is how we would do it:

Shrimp comes in IQF form or in block frozen form. The method of obtaining the net weight is different, but once that is completed, the method for calculating the count per pound is the same.

IQF: Deglaze a sample unit of shrimp in a 65F - 80F degrees water spray. Drain the shrimp for two minutes at a 20-degree incline on a #8 sieve, and weigh. The frozen de-glazed weight is the net weight of the sample unit.

Block frozen: Place the shrimp in a plastic or mesh bag and thaw under a 70 degree water faucet or circulated water bath. When thawed, immediately drain, as described above. The thawed, drained weight is the net weight of the sample unit.

Next, all workmanship defects are removed and weighed. Subtract the weight of all defects from the net weight. The remainder is called the "adjusted weight". The number of defect-free shrimp (called the "adjusted count") is then divided by the adjusted weight. The quotient is the count per pound. If the count per pound is in the correct size range, and if the uniformity of weight is less than 1.50, then you got what you paid for!

Aquaculture Certification Council

- Bart Cox



Aquaculture Certification Council, Inc. is a new nongovernmental body established to certify social, environmental and food safety standards at aquaculture facilities throughout the world. This Missouri nonprofit, non-member public benefit corporation builds on elements of the voluntary Global Aquaculture Alliance Responsible Aquaculture Program in a certification system that combines site inspections and effluent sampling with sanitary controls, therapeutic controls and traceability.

Part of ACC's mission is to help educate the aquaculture public regarding the benefits of applying best management practices and the advancing scientific technology that directs them. By implementing such standards, program participants can better meet the demands of the growing global market for safe, wholesome seafood pro-

duced in an environmentally and socially responsible manner.

Aquaculture Certification Council, Inc. offers a "process" rather than "product" certification, with an orientation toward seafood buyers, not consumers. While the ACC program is visually reflected in a "Best Aquaculture Practices" seal, this image is not to be used on seafood product packaging at the retail level.

Although ACC will initially certify only shrimp farms and processing plants, in the future hatcheries and feed mills will be incorporated into the certification program. Once certification is fully established for shrimp, other species will also be included.

Surefish has completed the auditor certification course and now has a certified auditor on staff. If you have questions regarding the Aquaculture Certification Council please contact Bart Cox at bart@surefish.com

My Experience in Chignik, Alaska

- Christine Keenan

All over the state of Alaska, salmon fishermen are more conscientious of the quality of their catch from Ketchikan to Kotzebue. Improvements are being made all over. Not to down play improvements being made in the various regions, as all deserve recognition for their efforts, but I would like to highlight one that is particularly unique and one I am familiar with.

The Chignik Seafood Producers Alliance, a.k.a. the co-op, has definitely made some innovative changes in the way fish are caught resulting in improvements in quality of the catch. The primary improvement is in the overall product freshness. This was done by eliminating handling steps in transferring fish from net to vessel, preventing damage from handling. This speeds up the whole catching process, which gets the fish to the processing plant sooner, so the fish have less of a chance of getting bruised and beat up.

The original intention was to eliminate some overhead costs, like fuel for example. Such overhead makes it difficult to reap any profits. The co-op has fewer fishing boats fishing for the entire fleet. The working vessels work hard but not as hard as they would to catch the same amount of fish if they weren't a coop. A few fishers take turns collecting fish in their nets and catch more fish in each seine net than if five or six boats were simultaneously targeting the same fish in the same fishing hole. The non-competitive atmosphere has fishers helping other fishers, because even when they are in different boats they are all in the same boat. Here, because the next step is eliminated, they can take their time catching the fish, making sure the "gillers" are freed and handling fish with two hands, not by the tail, etc. . Instead of being placed on board in the fisher's hold, the fish are transferred directly to the tender alive. By doing so time is saved in maintaining the sanitation of fewer holds (only those of the tenders). The tenders are typically seine vessels themselves; too big to catch fish profitably, they now collect, chill and taxi the fish to the plant. Because they can only hold a limited amount of fish they deliver frequently.

They have also been working on increasing the amount of live fish that they can deliver to the processor. Their live bled fish program is unique. Basically the fish are bled and die just prior to being processed and frozen making for the freshest possible fresh-frozen fish. It is an elaborate process. A lot of efforts were made in developing these systems and communication at all stages is of utmost importance.

New and inventive ways of producing higher quality product happens all the time in every industry. It was a great experience for me to see newness and innovation in the salmon industry. This system seems to be working well for this region. It may not be the new wave for the entire industry, but illustrates that putting ideas together can create change and hopefully for the better.

