



ASMI Customer Advisory Panel (CAP) August 2025 Meeting Summary

Event Overview: The ASMI CAP convened for a 2-day meeting in Homer, Alaska on August 19-20, 2025. CAP members present were:

Foodservice

- Keith Brunell: Food & Beverage/Chef

Retail

- John Steinmetz: Senior Buyer Fresh Seafood, Walmart

At Large

- Gregory Jeffers: Director of McDonald's Business Unit & Seafood Procurement, Gorton's, Inc.
- Stephanie Mitchell: Senior Manager, Sodexo
- Jason Hedlund: Principal Category Merchant of Procurement – Seafood, Whole Foods Market

Europe

- Jens Peter Klausen: J.P. Klausen & Co. A/S
- Dan Aherne: Group CEO, New England Seafood International Ltd.

Japan

- Kohei Yagita: Chief Merchandiser of Products Division, Seven-Eleven Japan Co., Ltd.

China

- Linming Gao: General Manager, Everfish International Ltd./Qingdao Yutai Import & Export Co. Ltd.

Main Topics of Discussion

1. Telling the Alaska Story

A throughline throughout the meeting was how ASMI can better tell the “Alaska” story not just the “Alaska Seafood” story. The objective being weaving in many different vignettes for example



sled dog mushing and the Iditarod, the gold rush legacy, the oil fields, the pristine wilderness, indigenous groups, the northern lights, glaciers and icefields, tall mountain peaks and active volcanos, permafrost, Arctic tundra and the boreal forest, Land of the Midnight Sun, ivory and wood carving, bears, wolves, whales, caribou and more. These are all examples of attributes that make Alaska unique and captivating to customers.

ASMI does an excellent job of telling the Alaska Seafood story, but how can we tell the Alaska story in a more holistic, vibrant, and compelling fashion to allure consumers and sell the lifestyle brand? There is so much romance and mystique in Alaska that ASMI can capitalize on to better create an emotional connection and draw.

2. Sustainability

The discussion focused on the challenges and complexities surrounding the use of the term "sustainable," in the context of seafood and other products. There was discussion that the word had lost much of its impact, and become controversial and possibly legally risky, with some companies avoiding it altogether due to potential liability issues. The discussion included how different NGOs and organizations have varying definitions of sustainability, sometimes leading to confusion and legal disputes. The conversation also touched on alternative terms like, "wild," and "natural," being co-opted or misused, and the importance of focusing on specific sourcing standards and social accountability rather than the overused term, "sustainable." Finally, there was also a discussion about the cultural perceptions of sustainability in countries where this word does not directly translate and therefore can become convoluted and confusing.

Even after the discussion on these terms, the CAP did not recommend that ASMI change its tagline.

3. Industry Recapitalization/Modernization

Alaska producers must work to recapitalize/modernize production infrastructure to better compete in terms of both quality and better match the products/product forms sought by retailers. Some large asks included relevant infrastructure for products such as individual quick freezing (IQF) pollock and keta salmon. ASMI's ability to assist with this is largely in terms of feasibility analysis and facilitating connections with technologists to allow industry to make their



own determinations on the best return on investment for relevant improvements, as the funding required will be substantial and take time. Re-shoring of production was a part of this discussion as well.

ASMI is currently performing a NOAA Saltonstall-Kennedy (S-K) Grant Program which has these objectives as a key output, the first deliverable being an update of the Specialty Products Report, and a final deliverable of a tiered set of products and their necessary infrastructure (if necessary) to bring product to scale. Examples discussed included products such as marine collagen, cosmetics, etc.

Modernization efforts should also be focused on quality, as wild-capture Alaska seafood is often touted as the highest possible quality in marketing efforts. Technological improvements developed elsewhere for improved quality maintenance should be prioritized.

ASMI is currently working to generate an event with processing technologists such as Baader and Marel to facilitate a technology demonstration event. In addition, ASMI will be ensuring visits/missions between technologists and processors as part of both S-K and extended efforts.

The group suggested an innovation subcommittee to guide these processes, and when asked those present agreed to be part of ASMI S-K Project steering committee.

4. Health Claims and Messaging

ASMI should focus on the claims that can be made on seafood types, both in terms of positives (excellent source of etc...) and negatives (no artificial dyes, etc.) ASMI has generated a claims bible for industry use and is generating 1-pagers for both overall and species-specific use, aimed at assisting industry with label claims.

Conversations also touched on hunger/satiation, in which ASMI should focus on the cost effective nutrients (i.e. high nutrient content relative to cost) present which are both important for general health and overall satiety (healthy fats, quality protein).

In addition, there was an ask for better connection to federal regulators for increased presence in institutional markets. ASMI's nutrient data from previous S-K grants are being put into USDA Foundation Food database which may assist in this.



Other Topics of Discussion

- Origin, provenance and “wild” are still very important. Important to differentiate now from Russia product, as the Russia seafood ban will not last forever.
 - Origin may only go so far depending on the price of product.
- Quality and consistency are critical, no matter the origin/provenance.
- Critical to highlight the many benefits of Alaska seafood (health, communities, women and indigenous fishermen, cold water equals good seafood, fisheries management, high standards, etc. etc.)
- Significant opportunity in the QSR space for seafood, though this segment is being challenged by staffing and rising costs.
- It is important to connect with younger generations through their parents, quick interactions, simple meals, authenticity, and storytelling, and through platforms and applications they use (TikTok, Roblox, etc.). Ensure current consumer research on these critical age demographics.
- Certifications are important for marketing access, but origin is typically a more powerful selling point.