



Wild, Natural & Sustainable

Shellfish Committee Meeting
Tuesday, November 28, 2017
Beginning 1:30pm AKST
Captain Cook Hotel in Anchorage, AK

Dial-In Information
Call in number: 800-315-6338
Alternate Call in number: 1-913-904-9376
Access Code: 17238

Draft minutes

The meeting was called to order at 1:35pm by Chair Jake Jacobsen.

Members present:

Jake Jacobsen, Chair (Inter-Cooperative Exchange)
Rodger Painter, Vice Chair (Pearl of Alaska)
Linda Kozak (Kozak & Associates, Inc.)
Jim Stone (Alaska Scallop Association)
Joe Thompson (Trident Seafoods)

Others present:

Emily Gisler (ASMI staff)
Lisa Martinson (ASMI staff)
Becky Monagle (ASMI staff)
Michael Kohan (ASMI staff)
Sandy Sheh (ASMI China)
Tyson Fick (ABSC)
Tomi Marsh (ASMI Board Member)
Jessica Hathaway (National Fisherman)

An amendment to the agenda was made to add a section under New Business to review the Shellfish Buyer's Guide, as well as to add a general discussion regarding the RFM process.

A motion was made by Painter, seconded by Thompson, to approve the agenda as amended; the motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Kozak, seconded by Painter, to approve the minutes from October 25, 2016; the motion passed unanimously.

There was no public comment.

New Business:

Repositioning Snow Crab as a luxury item

It was discussed that as inventory of Snow Crab becomes more scarce and costs continue to rise, whether or not this traditionally low-cost species should be repositioned as a luxury item.

There was an overall concern with marketing toward luxury, as Thompson explained that Snow Crab is still the preferred choice at retail, even at the higher costs. It was decided that ASMI should not orient marketing toward the luxury market, but rather continue to promote as sustainable, traceable and legal, especially domestically. It's also worth emphasizing that the high quality is worth the value.

Thompson also noted that dark shell Bairdi Crab is something to consider addressing in 2018 to gain acceptance among consumers, highlighting that it is a fuller crab with more meat that maintains the same quality and flavor. The committee thought that ASMI should stress to the market that the darker shell coloration of Bairdi this year is all part of the sustainability program. It is a natural phenomenon that does not degrade the product in any way other than its visual appearance.

Shellfish nomenclature

Kozak addressed the change in nomenclature from Brown King Crab to Golden King Crab, which can now legally be marketed as such. It was reported that this has substantially increased interest in Asia and has had great success thus far. Thompson noted that nomenclature for Blue King Crab may need to be addressed in the future as well, but to monitor now and address in another year.

Centolla Crab nomenclature

Chair Jacobsen noted that Centolla Crab has been marketed under a variety of names, causing confusion among consumers. It was requested of ASMI to raise awareness that these are not Alaska king crab and to differentiate in the marketplace.

Traceability requirements and what it means for the market

The additional scrutiny in origin and supply chain for King Crab beginning in 2018 were expressed as a concern, as this could enable other fisheries that are catching illegally to claim legality since it's caught within the country. It was confirmed that ASMI should not place an emphasis on this bill in order to avoid illegal catching being claimed as legal. Recommended messaging was requested to only emphasize the sustainable quality of the catch, noting that if consumers want sustainable they want traceable, and should ask for Alaska.

Shellfish supply review and trends

A discussion regarding overall crab supply was had, as supply is low and future trends are not very optimistic. It was agreed upon that low quotas are a sign of conservative management, with more kept available in the ecosystem for reproduction. Fick noted that crab is particularly prone to fluctuation within the natural cycle, which presents a challenge to reduce harvest when it seems necessary, and increase whenever possible. Kozak concluded that the message ASMI should highlight is that these are the best managed fisheries in the world, and the crab harvests available are entirely sustainable. Lastly, Kozak added that a harvest strategy is being developed for the board to adopt, likely in March, which will show quotas in other species as well.

Mercury testing and the Shellfish Buyer's Guide

New Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) testing for mercury in King Crab was addressed with Kohan in the Technical Committee, as many wonder why this has now suddenly become an issue. Thompson stated that this isn't a concern for crab since they don't live long enough to incur mercury, however Kozak added that there needs to be more information. Listeria was also mentioned as a concern. It was requested that the Technical Committee to look into the issue further and monitor, sharing any updates with the committee.

Kohan presented an initial draft of the new Shellfish Buyer's Guide, which the committee reviewed and provided initial feedback. Committee members will have until Dec. 10 to review more thoroughly and provide additional comments.

RFM

Kozak explained that many new and existing crab fisheries are up for review for sustainability, and all will eventually be on the path to certification. It was acknowledged among the group that ASMI took the lead, as requested, on funding the certification for Bairdi and Golden King Crab this year, and the committee is happy to see the process moving forward.

Stone added that scallop quotas are currently very low, as many juvenile and smaller scallops, which sell for less, are more difficult to sell. It was requested that ASMI help promote smaller-size scallops, specifically domestically.

Key Questions:

1. What specific concerns or marketing needs do you feel should be brought to the ASMI Operational Committees for them to consider?
 - Scallop quotas – marketing for smaller sizes (domestic committee)
 - Challenges of marketing when you have fluctuating stock sizes.
 - Address old/mature shell crab – how to market
 - Investigate allowable listeria levels in other food types, and to continue to monitor mercury issue (technical committee)

2. Do you have any overall industry concerns that should be brought to the Committee Chairs meeting for them to discuss and carry forward to the ASMI Board of Directors?
 - See above.
3. What major challenges do you see the industry facing in the coming years? (short-term and long-term)
 - Adjusting to climate change, which changes the food chain for all these species for harvest.
 - Marketing uncertainties with potentially rapidly changing crab stocks, particularly shellfish (red king crab)—we have no idea what the future holds.
 - Labor force for people in the industry, training up young people. Sponsorships?
 - General funding and stock assessment issues.
4. What trends or opportunities can you identify that ASMI Programs can capitalize on?
 - Meal kits (Blue Apron) and easy-to-prepare meals.
 - Miso black cod recipe from Andy’s presentation, and recipes in general.
 - Health-focus. Capitalize on growing awareness that people have now on health and lifestyle.
 - Capitalize on trends like Deadliest Catch to showcase shellfish fishing.
 - Work with the fleet (ASMI Domestic) and retailers such as Hy-Vee to talk with the employees working face-to-face with customers. Program (such as a “crabinar”) for seafood managers to help them be more knowledgeable and enthusiastic about selling shellfish. Consider contests for employees.
 - Expand on Tyson Fick’s crab trip out to Dutch Harbor and to New York.

Painter was elected as Chair; Jacobson was elected as Vice Chair.

Painter made a motion to adjourn; Stone and Thompson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:55pm.