Alaska Responsible Fisheries Management Certification
Offering choice in demonstrating Responsible Fisheries Management for Sustainable Use

Council of State Governments West
August 9, 2014
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Who is ASMI?

- Marketing organization that works to increase the worldwide consumption and awareness of Alaska as a source of wild, natural and sustainable seafood.
- A partnership of Alaska fishermen, processors and the State of Alaska.
- Assist retail, foodservice and consumer PR through various promotion, education and training programs.
53% of Seafood Harvested in the U.S. Comes from Alaska

Five species of salmon -
King, Sockeye, Coho, Keta and Pink

Whitefish Varieties -
Cod, Alaska Pollock, Halibut, Black Cod, Sole/Flounder, Rockfish, Surimi

Shellfish -
King, Snow and Dungeness Crab; Weathervane Scallops, Spot Prawns, Oysters
Sustainability Not New in Alaska

- Sustainability and Responsible Fisheries Management an element of Alaska efforts for more than 50 years.
  - Since 1959, the Alaska State Constitution has mandated management of the fishery resources on the sustained yield principle—the only state in the country with such explicit conservation language.

- Alaska recognition - journal articles
  - Worm, Hilborn et al, 2009; (Science, vol 325)
  - Pitcher et al 2009; (Nature 457: 658-659)
  - Economist 2009
  - National Geographic, February 2007

- Global recognition as a model of sustainability largely due to strong fisheries governance
What Makes Alaska the Model For Sustainability?

• The diligent work of fishery professionals, management, and active stakeholder involvement sets Alaska apart from the majority of fishery management regimes in the world:

• Responsible Fisheries Management governance
• Transparency
• Precautionary approach
• Based on science
• Collaboration
• Enforcement
• Resulting in effective management

These goals sought by certification schemes are already inherent in Alaska’s governance
Certification as a Market Requirement

• Despite being the globally recognized sustainability leader, we were constrained in some markets due to absence of certification

• But how did fisheries certification become a market requirement?
Evolution of Certification

- The eNGO sustainability movement arose out of abject government failure in the EU. This was in marked contrast to fisheries management in the US.
- WWF/Unilever created the MSC to provide a vehicle for a market driven campaign.
- Alaska saw a competitive advantage to marketing our inherent sustainability and the Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game signed on with the MSC to certify Alaska salmon.
- Retailers rushed to develop sustainable sourcing policies.
- Many became partners with environmental organizations.
- As more fisheries were shown to be “sustainable”, certification became less of a competitive advantage and more of a requirement for market entry.
Disappearing “Alaska” Brand

- We began to see Ecolabels brands replace “Alaska.”
- We are lumped in with competitors, some of whom are only “making progress” toward sustainability.
So Why RFM Certification?

- The basic request from our customers was for a background assurance certificate issued by an independent 3rd party, that could be used as part of CSR programs—not interested in new eco-labels—just the ability to demonstrate they source from responsibly managed fisheries.

- ASMI Board directed staff to evaluate certification alternatives that would provide:
  - A service for all the Alaska industry—all Alaska fishermen and processors have access to the fishery certifications without additional cost
  - A cost-effective independent, 3rd party alternative that maintains the Alaska brand integrity and Alaska origin.
  - Credible choice
Basic Approach of RFM Certification

- Verification of fishery management practices - not used to drive fishery management policies that are the domain of designated competent authorities
RFM Integrates the FAO Principles and Criteria

Template: FAO Circular #917 by Dr. John Caddy

FAO-based Conformance Criteria for Responsible Fisheries Management
Version 1.2 Sept 2011

GT ISO 65 Accreditation

Wild, Natural & Sustainable
The Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries was approved in 1995 by the Twenty-eighth session of the Committee on Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations as a suitable basis for judging whether living aquatic resources are being harvested in a way which is compatible with sustainable development…” (FAO circular #917, 1996)

“…which can be used for an evaluation by the managers themselves or those involved in certification of a fishery as ‘responsible’ as defined under the Code.” (FAO circular #917, 1996)
Thus RFM Following the Template Put Out by FAO

- But with ISO accreditation on the 3rd party certification process, we provide rigor and a full measure of objectivity

- RFM stays true to the intentions of FAO
Snapshot of Why We Support the FAO-Based Model

- Solid and respected underlying evaluation criteria: FAO provides the world’s most recognized fisheries management guidance
- ISO (International Organization for Standardization) world’s most recognized methodology for certification
- Combination of FAO foundation and ISO certification approach provides robust and credible independent verification
- This model adheres to concept of what certification is, making it a good option for science-based certification
- Plus, FAO tools have provided for:
  - MSC Standards
  - Responsible Fishing Standards
  - IFFO Responsible Supply Standard
  - FAO-Based RFM Standards - Alaska, Iceland and others coming along
- To provide industry and customers with choice
  - Choice is the enemy of the monopoly. There are standards choice in every other sector.
FAO-Based Conformance Criteria Groupings

1. The Fisheries Management System
2. Science and Stock Assessment Activities
3. The Precautionary Approach
4. Management Measures
5. Implementation, Monitoring and Control
6. Serious Impacts of the Fishery on the Ecosystem

Evaluation of any of the RFM assessment reports and the comprehensive treatment of these topics will demonstrate beyond any doubt that RFM provides a robust method upon which to base sourcing decisions—essential topics are evaluated.
Go to www.alaskaseafood.org to monitor the certification progress of all Alaska’s major commercial fisheries.

*Accredited Certification Body (ACB) = Global Trust, Ltd.*
What Certification Is and Is Not

Definition: Certification is to measure/guarantee against a standard By an independent third party.

- **Certification Is:**
  - Verification that research and fisheries advice is based on generally accepted methodology.
  - A process that allows fisheries management to remain the task of competent authorities.
  - A facilitator for market access for seafood.

- **Certification Is Not:**
  - Marine research nor is it fisheries advice.
  - Interference with fisheries management.
  - Restricting market access for seafood.
Current Certification Situation

- Sustainability has become a business itself with millions being spent on certification programs.
- Difference of opinion as to whether ecolabel programs should be attestation of sustainability sourced seafood, or a means to drive change in fishery management practices through market pressure.
- Concern over trade barrier issues. In Alaska we have experienced such barriers.
What is Really at Stake Here?

- Sovereignty of fishery management
- Freedom of market access
  - By insisting on eNGO-only labels, access to markets even by well-managed fisheries is being impeded—the labels begin to function as trade barriers
Remember What Sustainability is About

- Responsible fisheries management
  - Fisheries with a transparent participatory governance structure
  - With a precautionary approach
  - Based on science
  - Resulting in effective management

- It’s not about eco-label; it’s not about which process for assessing fisheries certification is better than another.
Ultimately, Common Sense Must Prevail

- Certification is an option - not everyone needs it.
- For those that want it, having a choice is important
  - Drives environmental change, program improvements and cost-effective options
  - RFM is a credible model and will continue to evolve
- Credible certification is not only defined by eNGOs, but also by governments and industry
- Ultimately, the goal is good fishery governance, not certification
For more information:
www.alaskaseafood.org

Thank you.
RFM Dedicated to Continuous Improvement

- Key areas of evolution:
  - Strengthening governance structure – declare ownership; separate client ship
  - Increase stakeholder input
  - Entrance of additional ISO accredited CBs
  - Development of guidance documents and training tools
  - Formalizing terms of remit for new Committees