Kelp markets – consumers, chefs and institutional buyers

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Kelp's potential

- Aligns with regional food and coastal management goals
- Regional economic benefits; high value product globally
- Sustainable seafood product
- Minimal input and infrastructure
- Absorbs dissolved nitrogen, phosphorus, carbon dioxide

Source: Humphries 2017

Market assessment

- Markets opportunities undefined and unexplored
- Define existing and potential supply/value chains
- Focus groups:
  - Kelp growers – RI, MA
  - Regulators – ME, NH, MA, RI, CT, NY
  - Institutional buyers
  - Chefs

Selkie beer
Source: NH Sea Grant

Kelp for food - Product Options

- Fresh
  - Pros: Little processing – less cost/time
  - Cons: Short shelf-life; wet product is heavy to ship
- Dried
  - Pros: Little processing infrastructure needed; light for shipping; long shelf-life; rehydrating allows for use like fresh
  - Cons: Lower price from buyer; competition with imports
- Frozen (noodles or cubes)
  - Pros: Long shelf-life; potential for many uses
  - Cons: Infrastructure/labor needed for processing

Consumer surveys

- Administered at:
  - Farmers' markets
  - Food festivals
  - Community Supported Fisheries pick-up locations
- Locations:
  - NH, MA, RI, CT, and NY
- Spring and summer 2017
- 142 respondents

Sources: Aquidneck Growers Market; Boston JerkFest

Assessing consumer interest

- Objectives
  - Gauge level of interest for seaweed
  - Identify where to focus efforts to grow market
- Questions:
  - Have you ever eaten any kind of seaweed before?
  - If yes, how was it prepared?
  - How interested are you in trying seaweed food products, generally?
  - What kind of seaweed preparation would you be most excited to try?





Sources: paleoveganista.com; www.splendidtable.org; www.doradaly.com; www.muscleandfittness.com; blog.radiantlifecatalog.com

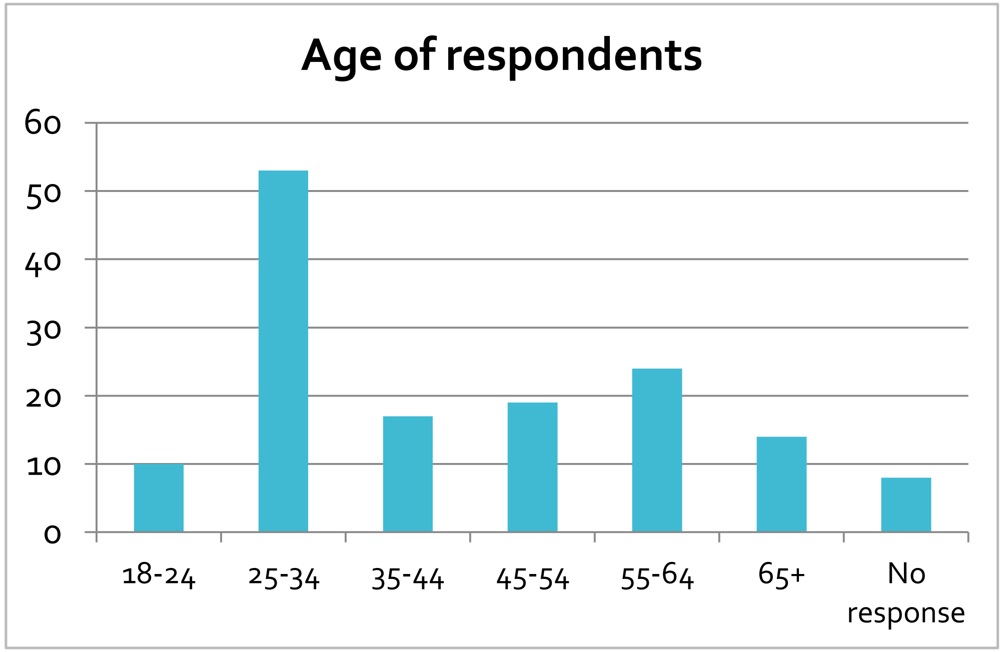
Who answered the survey?

- Gender:
  - Female – 56%
  - Male – 40%
  - No response – 7%

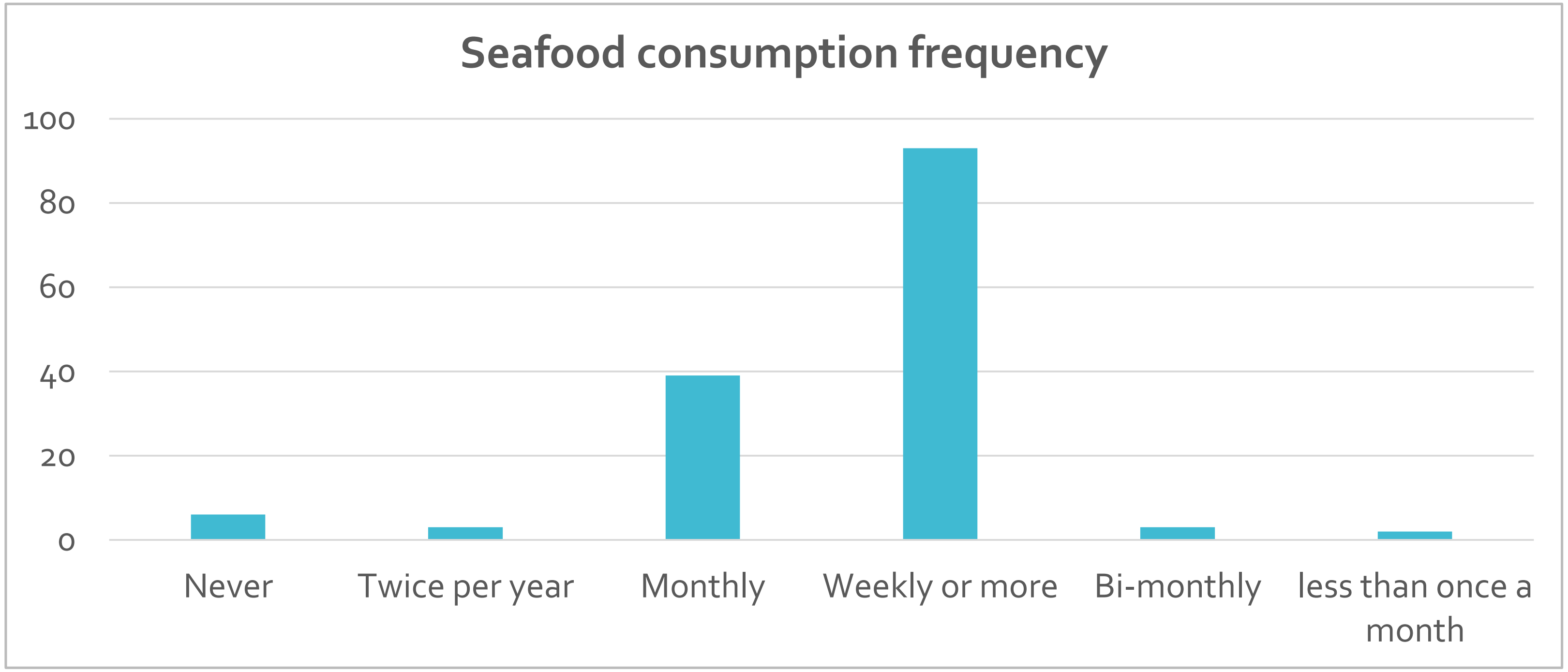
- Income
  - Range:

    <$20,000 - $200,000
  - Mode:

    $75,000 - $99,999



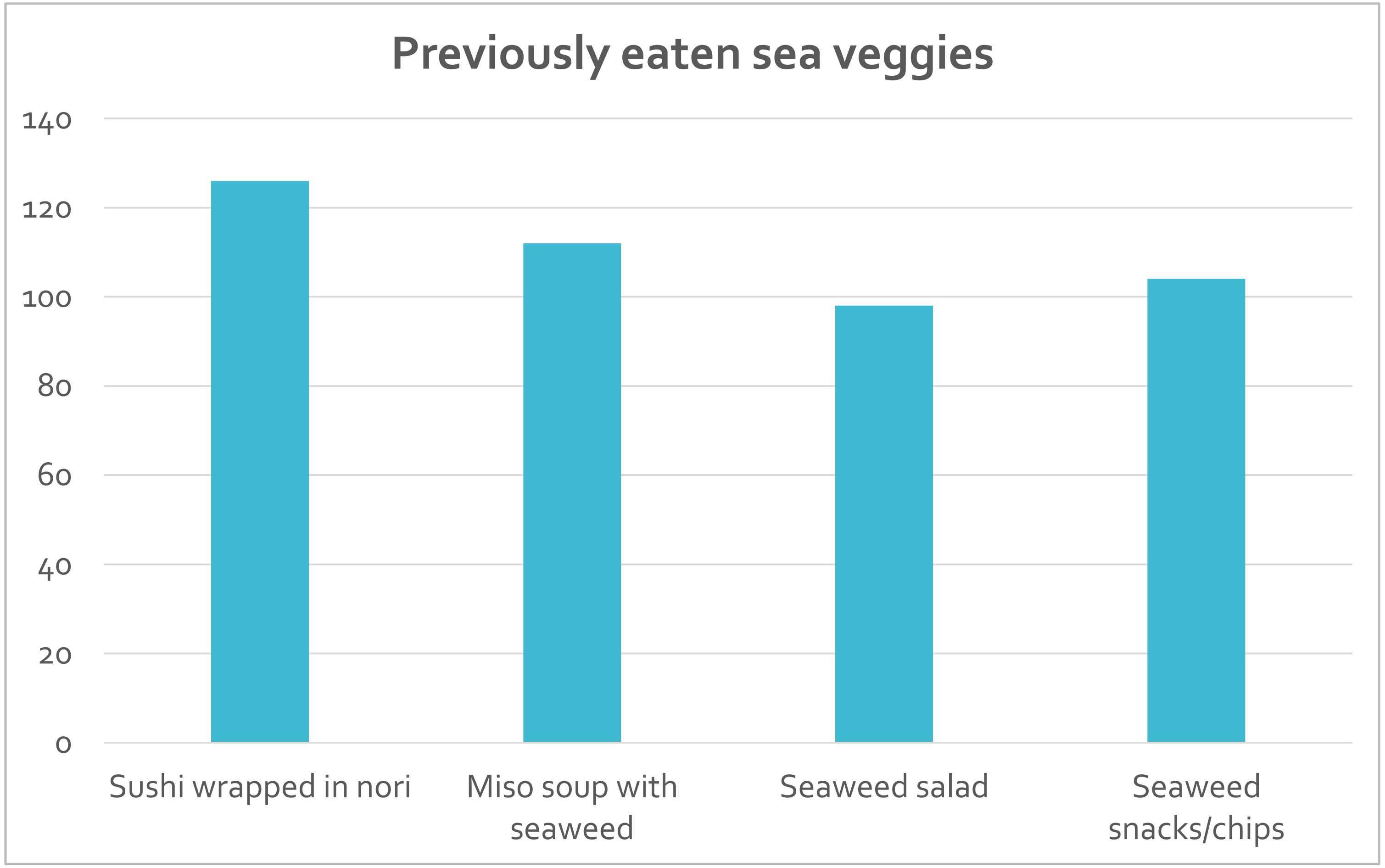
Seafood preferences



- Preferred seafood in restaurants:
  - 36% Salmon
  - 26% Shrimp
  - 21% Shellfish
  - 10% Cod
  - 15% Anything
- Preferred seafood in restaurants:
  - 46% Salmon
  - 35% Shrimp
  - 12% Cod
  - 10% Shellfish
  - 10% Anything

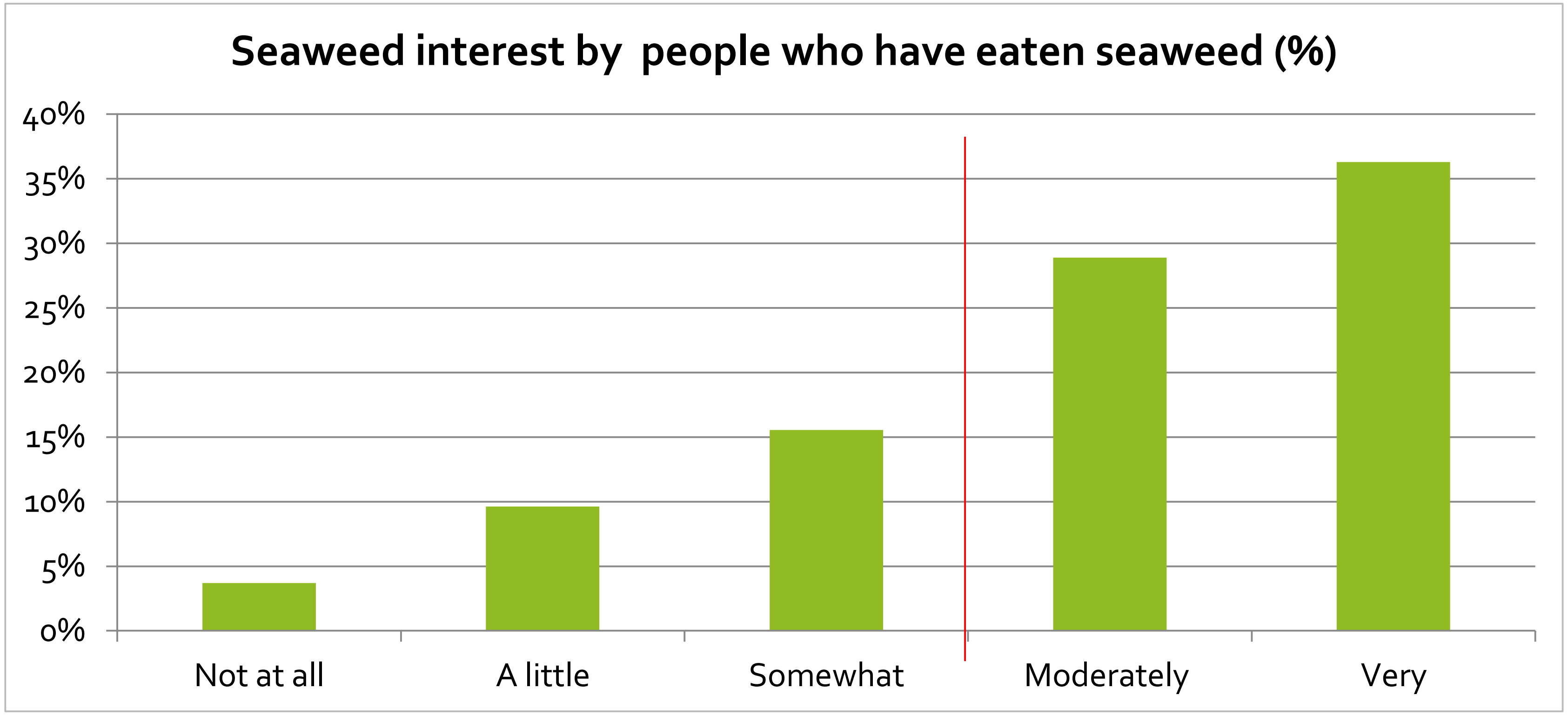
Experience with sea veggies

- 135 of 142 respondents had eaten sea veggies in some form



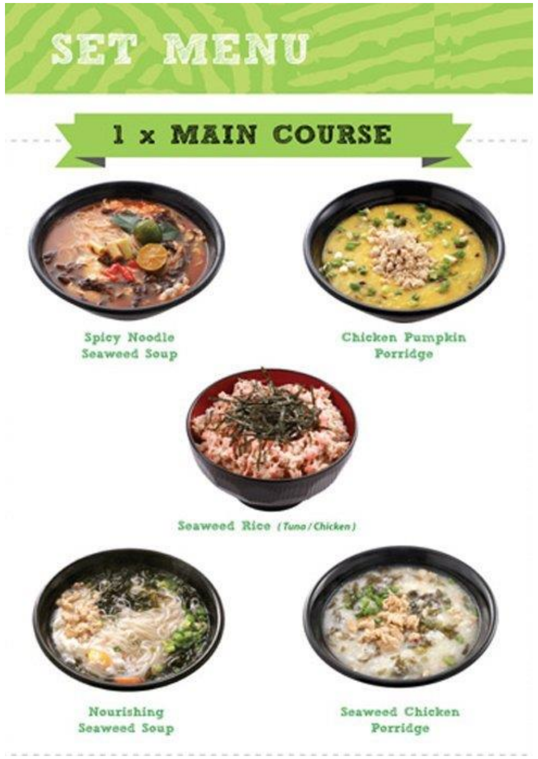
Consumer interest in sea veggies

- 65% of respondents who had previously eaten seaweed had a moderate to high interest in eating local seaweed (n = 135)



Potential for increased consumption

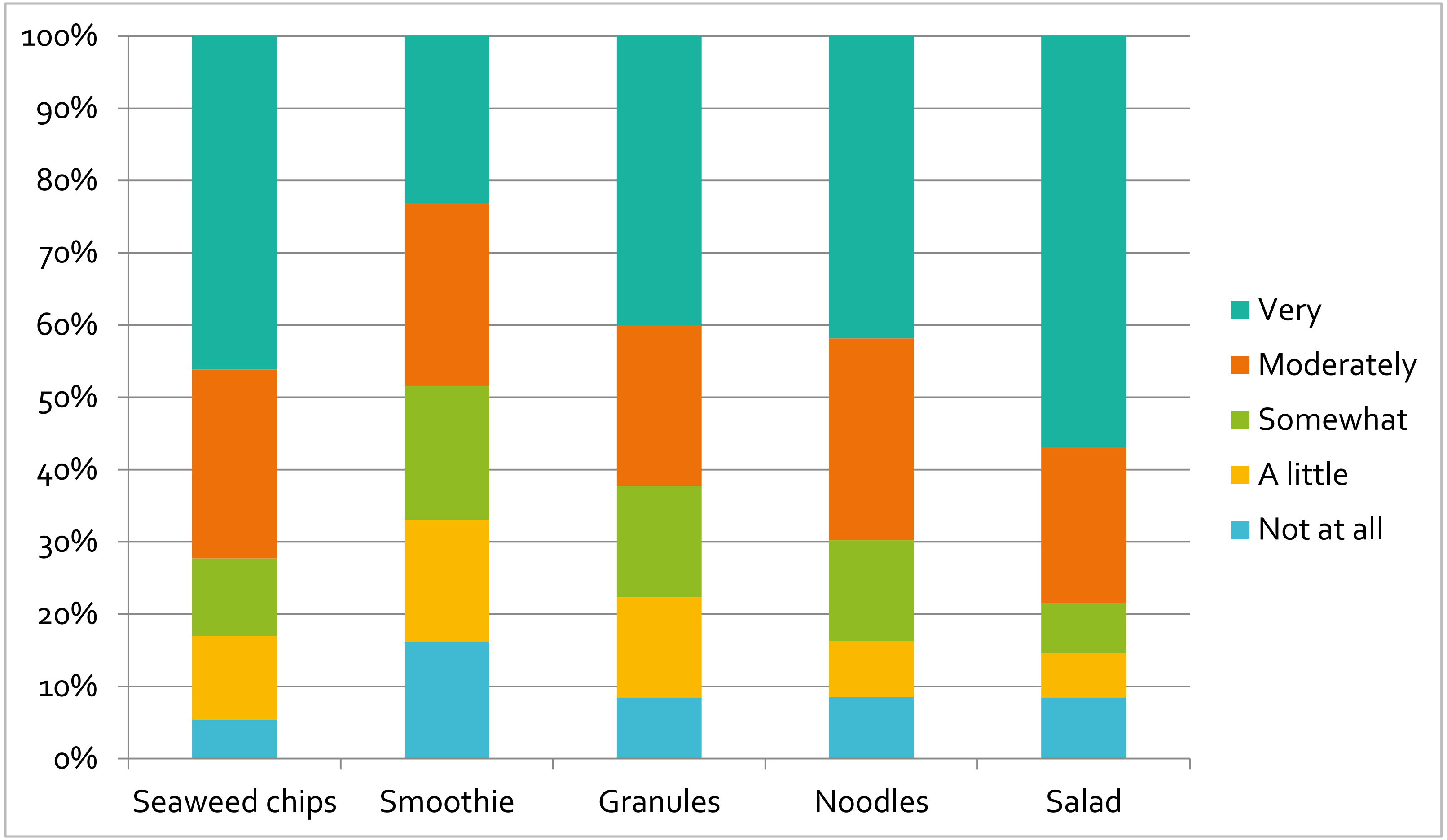
- Restaurants could be a key in increasing consumption of sea veggies
- 100 of 142 respondents would be most likely to try a new seaweed dish in a restaurant



Sources: www.zomato.com; www.boemagazine.com

Sea veggie dish preferences

- High level of stated interest in all dishes
- Seaweed salad showed the highest stated interest among dishes in our survey (72% Moderate and Very)



Independent Chef/ Ed. Institutional Buyers

- Lots of interest; aligns with local, sustainable food goals
  - Especially associated with Asian foods (e.g., sushi, soup, salad)
  - Increased access to plant-based proteins (i.e., vegan foods)
- High volume needed
  - Institutions: most interested in processed, longer shelf-life
  - Chefs: need supply for 3 months
- Experience
  - "Great for the students when they know it's been grown in the area – gets some buzz going"
  - Imported product has preservative on it so was not purchased
  - "Seasonality" is interesting

Moving forward

- Individual consumer interest is unlikely to develop the industry
- Institutional buyer interest high but need shelf-stable products and high volume
- Needs:
  - Assessment of processing techniques and associated costs
  - Product development
  - Engagement with institutional buyers and chefs

Sources: Mara Seaweed; Ocean Approved

Questions/ Comment

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