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
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.muscleandfitness.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

Seafood consumption frequency
• 135 of 142 respondents had eaten sea veggies in some form

Experience with sea veggies

Previously eaten sea veggies

- Sushi wrapped in nori
- Miso soup with seaweed
- Seaweed salad
- Seaweed snacks/chips
65% of respondents who had previously eaten seaweed had a moderate to high interest in eating local seaweed (n = 135)
• 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
• 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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