

# Alaska Seafood Used in Worldwide Aid Programs

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Erik Wander/KMXT

Not all Alaska seafood sells for 20 dollars a pound at tony outside fish markets. Some reaches the millions of needy people in the U.S. and abroad through the coordinated efforts of the Alaska fishing industry, the state and non-governmental organizations operating food aid programs. KMXT's Erik Wander has more.

The Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute's Global Food Aid Program provides Alaska canned salmon to food aid programs in Central and South America, Asia and Africa. Bruce Schactler is the Global Food Aid Program director for ASMI. He said the initial goal of the program was to create a market, and that it was one among many ideas dealing with the low price of pink salmon. Schactler was hired by then Governor Frank Murkowski to create demand for the product by marketing it to food aid programs.

-- (Schactler  
1 37 sec. "The customer is the ... is the United States government.")

Schactler said the challenge of marketing the product in such a way was daunting, especially because canned salmon is expensive when compared with other products typically used in food aid programs. However, he said canned salmon offers several unique advantages over those products and that more attention is being paid to nutritional qualities now than in recent years.

-- (Schactler  
2 38 sec. "It's the only solid animal  
... gets rained on, that's okay.")

Schactler said the program

has expanded since it began to include organizations providing food aid domestically in addition to its international customers. He estimated that over 20 percent of one-pound cans of pink salmon produced last year went into domestic and foreign food aid programs.

-- (Schactler  
3 47 sec. "It isn't economics 101 to ... then  
it's a good thing.")

Schactler said raising awareness of the program was the goal of his visit to the Alaska House in New York City earlier this month, an event which Todd Palin, husband of Governor Sarah Palin, also attended. He said that while decision making regarding what to purchase for food aid programs is often politically motivated and competitive, the program has been succeeding so far as it was intended, noting the many people who benefit in addition to those being helped and fed. He also said he appreciates the advocacy of Alaska's congressional delegation.

-- (Schactler  
4 41 sec. "Senator Murkowski in... the  
communities as a whole.")

Schactler said the Alaska Global Food Aid Program will continue its efforts to develop and expand. He is currently working on identifying other products for use in the program. He said the next project involves introducing canned herring, along with canned salmon, in food aid programs in Uganda.

I'm  
Erik Wander.

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