

ASMI Sends Alaska Seafood Worldwide

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

This week a number of representatives from the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute, also known as ASMI, are in town for an annual meeting to discuss how to better market Alaska seafood around the world. ASMI has a presence in about 21 countries worldwide, with representatives on the ground promoting the state's bounty. A handful of those individuals spoke on KMXT's Talk of the Rock yesterday and explained exactly what their job entails, and what seafood varieties are favored in different countries.

Ksenia Gorovaia represents Russia and said despite sharing the same waters, Russia has a huge taste for Alaska seafood.

"Each country is very different for Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute, we all import different species of fish. For Russia it would be, strange enough, salmon roe. You would think that we have salmon roe ourselves but we eat a lot of it so we enjoy Alaska salmon roe as well. Then it would be surimi. And on the high end side that's black cod and halibut, so that's what's going on in Western Russia at the moment."

She said her job entails retail promotions like hosting samplings or cooking demonstrations so restaurants overseas know how to prepare the fish and have an opportunity to try it. David McClellan represents Southern Europe and said his marketing efforts include some of the same things.

"As in Russia, what we're doing in Portugal, Spain and Italy, we do a lot of trade servicing, trade shows, newsletters, trade missions. Bringing together buyers and sellers is often what ASMI is very active with in all our markets."

Jose Madeira is the representative from Brazil. He said the Brazil program is relatively new to ASMI, but growing rapidly.

"We are like beef country, but per capita consumption of seafood in Brazil has doubled in the last decade. So as they mentioned, Brazil is the biggest salt cod market in the world. So a lot of processors they buy the cod from Alaska, they go to Portugal and they ship to Brazil."

This year Alaska took a hit in the cod market, which McClellan explained is a simple supply and demand situation.

“The world cod market, the prices have dropped tremendously. Production of Atlantic cod has increased significantly this year, making it very difficult to sell Alaska cod into these markets. So what do we do to combat that is what we’re meeting and talking about is how does ASMI work in these markets to raise the perceived value of Alaska cod.”

McClellan said this year’s struggle with cod is an example of constantly changing markets within the seafood industry.

The ASMI representatives will hold meetings and take tours of hatcheries and processing in plants in Kodiak the rest of the week. They had hoped to meet with fishermen, but most boats are out catching the products the organization markets year round.

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