

Alaska Seafood Sales to Brazil Double

Tuesday, 25 June 2013

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

Alaska seafood is now being imported directly into the world's fifth-largest country. Brazilian supplier Noronha Pescados this month started importing Alaska salmon, pollock and cod directly to Walmart and several other Brazilian retail stores.

Michael Cerne, the executive director of the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute said the Brazilian market is growing rapidly because of ASMI's marketing efforts.

ASMI's Brazilian marketer, Jose Madeira, said his countrymen are fast developing a taste for seafood.

"The Brazilian program for ASMI is relatively new. We just started about a year and a half ago," he said. "We're like a beef country, but per capita consumption of seafood in Brazil has like doubled in the last decade. Previously, the only Alaska seafood Brazil saw was cod, but it was shipped first to Portugal, where it was salted. Cerne said by doing that, the fish could not be labeled 'Alaskan' because of a lack of traceability. Directly shipping solves that issue. And as Madeira points out, smoothes the way for other Alaska fish.

"So we're also exploring other opportunities with other species like salmon, halibut, black cod, and some other species," he said. "So we see great potential for Brazil; it's a relatively new market, and we're just starting to see the numbers moving up."

As Cerne pointed out, the growth in the markets comes from a lot of marketing and promotion behind the scenes, which is where Madeira comes in.

"We do a lot of promotion efforts with our partners in Brazil supporting the importers," he said. "We do retail merchandizing, we have a very extensive program for advertizing, trade missions, participate in trade shows. We just organized a buyer delegation from Brazil to come to Alaska in July."

Madeira admitted that Alaska wild salmon has a tough upstream struggle in order to make inroads in his country, where farmed Atlantic salmon currently rules.

"So it's a new concept in Brazil for the wild salmon, but we are making a lot progress in that terms. We see a lot of potential mainly in like food service industry. They're pretty much interested in wild salmon," Madeira said. "We have a strong message about salmon, and I think eventually we're going to break into the Brazilian market and get some very good market share."

ASMI opened its Brazil office in the fall of 2011 and conducted two trade missions there in March and December of last year. ASMI's figures show imports from Alaska doubled in 2012, and Cerne expects the trend to continue.

