

Walmart, ASMI, Close to Salmon Deal

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

Walmart executives were in Alaska last week, meeting with state and industry officials about salmon. Though it has not followed through, the world's largest retailer last year said without the Marine Stewardship Council's stamp of approval, they would have to cease carrying salmon from Alaska.

ASMI spokesman Tyson Fick said he came away from the visit feeling confident salmon will stay on Walmart's shelves.

"I think it went really well. It gives a lot of cause for optimism how it was received for both the sustainability efforts and management efforts of Fish and Game and NOAA in Alaska, as well as the RFM certification program."

"RFM" certification is the current scheme ASMI uses to ensure sustainability of Alaska salmon. It's based on the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization standards.

In a statement following the meeting Walmart vice president for meat and seafood, David Baskin, said the company remains committed to buying Alaska seafood, and was excited that ASMI has agreed to work with Walmart to ensure the RFM standard meets the principles for credible sustainable fisheries programs.

Fick said the meeting really was just to ensure Walmart officials that RFM was as reliable as any other sustainability scheme used elsewhere.

"Basically it was seeing how the RFM certification meets with their sustainability goals. There was never any question about the quality of the management or commitment by the state and the managers and the fishermen, for that matter. It was just a matter of crossing the Ts and dotting the Is to make sure that the program fits for their needs."

Chris Schraeder, Walmart's senior manager of sustainability communications, said in a statement that the company intends to continue purchasing Alaska salmon if the company determines RFM to be up to their standards.

Walmart will use final standards yet to be issued by The Sustainability Consortium, but Seafood dot com reports RFM certification carried out by Global Trust, will meet the draft guidelines already released. In the end, Fick said he expects a resolution that'll make everyone happy.

"Alaska salmon is really important to them. They told us that 97 percent of the salmon they sell in their stores in the U.S. is all Alaska salmon. So they're very committed to continue to provide that to their customers who want it. Who demand it."

Among the state officials who met with the Walmart executives were Governor Parnell and ASMI's Executive

Director Mike Cerne. ###