

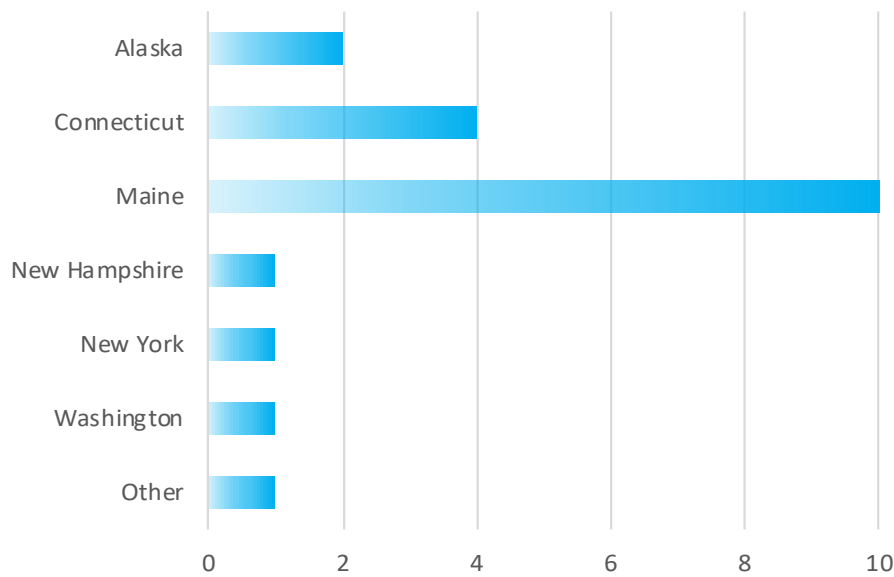
Seaweed Hub Market Development Work Group Virtual Meeting Notes 5/6/21, 3-4PM EST, Zoom

Meeting Agenda:

- I. Welcome and 2020 recap
- II. Breakout groups
 - a. Product Development
 - b. Trade Representation (Associations, Institutes, etc.)
 - c. Consumer Education and Outreach Opportunities
- III. Report out and wrap up

I. Welcome and 2020 recap

This meeting had 20 participants representing the following states:



Last Meeting we:

- Reviewed the structure and purpose of the Seaweed Hub
- Discussed the purpose of the topical Work Groups
- Took a look at "big picture" challenges and opportunities for Market Opportunities
- Broke into smaller groups to discuss these priorities

Goal for this meeting: narrow in on priority topics identified at previous meetings. Priorities that we heard in last meeting's breakout groups:

- **Consumer education** campaigns and efforts can be effective ways to build markets and can be accomplished relatively short-term
- **Product development** and success has key considerations, like standards and grading, consistent supply, and nutritional info
- **Industry representation** can tap into more long-term marketing efforts, and future efforts to pursue this will need to meet the size of the industry

II. Breakout Groups

- 1) Product Development
- 2) Trade Representation (Associations, Institutes, etc.)
- 3) Consumer Education and Outreach Opportunities

Each breakout group utilized Miro, an interactive online 'whiteboard', and participated in a discussion touching on these three topics:

- 1) Existing Resources
- 2) Challenges
- 3) Opportunities

The following notes represent comments on the whiteboard and breakout group discussions.

Product Development Breakout Group

(9 participants)

A. Existing Resources

Q: What seaweed products do well?

- Dried seaweeds
- Fresh frozen products
- Food Safety guidelines-FSMA available
- MCSV, kelp crunch is great!
- Red's-laver, dulse or Irish moss all sell well
- Fermented seaweed salad
- In food CPG space: not reinventing the wheel, something that can be matched against an existing ingredient
- Existing products with added kelp. Cosmetic, foodstuff (sauces etc.) Hidden ingredients for entire family
- Supplements with seaweed
- Products we all know and love! Ex: salsa

Q: What resources do we already have?

- Costs and upfront capital is necessary, be patient with testing, certain companies can help develop products, and float a seaweed company through the entire process
- Universities can offer consumer and product research, assistance, etc.
- Food safety guidelines like FSMA
- Interest in non-food products and monetizing environmental services
- A mill for making more "sprinkles" or finer to be used like flour
- Seaweed kelp cutter

B. Challenges

Q: What challenges exist in seaweed product development?

- It's hard for those not familiar with this products development space to get into it
- How do you find a food producer/company to take on a new project?
- A lack of understanding that it can be actually easy to add to what exists
- Consumer aversion to the flavor of seaweed or the thought of seaweed
- No consistency in naming (not using Latin)
- National standards for determining composition. What needs to be determined for food, feeds. etc.
- A lack of studies to go with some of the "claims" that exist about seaweed
- Predicting what the next trend is. What kelp product will be next?
- Many 'trends' have trade associations/national efforts behind them
- It's really hard to predict food trends- sometimes this is seasonal! (ex. Christmas foods begin development in May)
- For any product development you need to think WAY ahead
- Matching the buying (farmed or wild) needs to the seasonality of the harvest/putting in seeds out to your development plan
- Short very seasonal harvest window, must be harvested and processed immediately
- Nutrient concentration dependent on time of harvest, consistent nutritional information
- Supply chain costs need to be considered (ex. National labs were testing biocrudes in AK. but it wasn't feasible)
- How to monetize ecosystem services
- Funding

C. Opportunities

Q: What do we need to create or do to eliminate these barriers?

- If there is an "umbrella"/generalized agreement about species naming
- Other food sectors have made names familiar with consumers
- There is some data available about consumer preferences which we can use
- How to differentiate American products vs. Asian or now European products?
- Master list of food producers in New England and beyond
- Marketing seaweed as a flavor enhancer, umami/savory
- Baseline data and planning tools
- FDA 3rd party audit for our industry
- Regulators and inspectors know what processing (and therefore products) is going on
- Streamlined processing, or just more processing in general
- Celebrity/ social media influencers

Trade Representation Breakout Group

(4 participants)

A. Existing Resources

Q: What resources do we already have?

Q: What similar models or associations already exist?

- [ABO \(algae biomass organization\)](#)
- [Sea Grant- Seaweed Hub](#)
- [National Aquaculture association](#)
- Seaweed producers across the country-strong network
- [Maine seaweed council](#)
- [Long Island Sound Ocean Cluster](#)

B. Challenges:

Q: What challenges exist in establishing trade representation for farmed seaweed?

- Small number of producers
- Small companies unable to pay to support representations
- Funding mechanism
- Agreeing on goal, focus, direction
- Differences between wild harvested and farmed
- Barrier: Benefits of trade representation not priority for new businesses
- Relatively young sector
- Wild harvesters want differentiation; have needs around wild resource management that farmers don't have
 - From comments: Not an issue in CT, wild harvest not allowed; farmers have stringent, HACCP, state testing regs.
- Different needs and issues of macro and micro algae
- Micro algae historically represented by biotech industry
- Many growing seaweed as a part-time business

C. Opportunities

Q: What do we need to create or do to advance this priority?

- Help seaweed producers see the value of existing trade associations so they are not the only ones paying for representation and become part of strategic alliances
- Trade org needs to bring value to farmers/industry
- Encourage existing trade associations to form seaweed subgroups
 - Other species groups have gone this way: organize under NAA, difficult financially to support organization for one species/species group
 - Seaweed representation in the National Aquaculture Association?
- Need national organization to engage in national issues (then could have subgroups within national org for relevant regions)
- National Seaweed Trade Association?
- More frequent Seaweed Hub gatherings! Getting everyone on the same page and connected
- Identify needs of the greater seaweed industry and give this list of priorities to (future) trade org.
- Have a seaweed group with high visibility on what they are doing
- Look for models from overseas
- Regional vs national level: industry looks different in ME and CT., not to mention AK

- Organize a meeting of regional associations to see how different regions are approaching organization
- Make use of different communications channels to get the word out on the value of trade org., on the benefits of joining, etc.

Consumer Education and Outreach Breakout Group:

(5 participants)

A. Existing Resources:

Q: What consumer education and outreach efforts (events, media, consumer research, etc.) currently exist?

- [New England Kelp Harvest Week](#)- just launched a couple of weeks ago- will be an annual event
- Virtual Seaweed Mania (NH Sea Grant) with Public Library
- Algae Technology Education Consortium/Algal Culture Extension shortcourse +links into numerous schools throughout USA
- CT Seaweed Week
- [Maine Seaweed Week](#)
- Videos
- [Seaweed Mania \(NH\)](#)
- Milford Oyster Festival- Ed and Kathy Rhoads
- Maine Coast Harvest- Title IX fisheries videos on kelp aquaculture
<https://www.maine coast harvest.com/the-films>

B. Challenges

Q: What challenges exist in developing consumer education and outreach?

- Consumer awareness/perception/literacy
- The term 'seaweed' to many consumers
- Showing the benefits of domestic kelp vs. imported seaweed
- Engaging with customers and educate them on the domestic kelp difference
- How do we reach those who don't already know about seaweed?
- Other words than sea veggies?
- Highlighting the Maine Kelp difference
- How do we get seaweed on a menu for more than just a week?
- Seems like there is opportunity with the fact that there are more women than men in seaweed farming (is this true?)
- How can we get partners to keep talking about seaweed throughout the year and not just a week?

C. Opportunities

Q: What do we need to create or do to advance this priority?

Q: How can we use existing resources?

- Chef/ restaurant events focused on food/cooking as the connection
- Continue to look at pairing/complimenting with other foods
- Focus on 'foodies' first
- Integrating into other 'mainstream' foods?
- Emphasize food security and safety, health benefits
- Use/emulate sushi (even crawfish) model/experience
- Seaweed info campaign
- Adding seaweed to oyster/shellfish focused outreach events
- Can we piggyback with other events (e.g. Zoe's Food and Wine?)
- Adding Maine aquaculture films to the [Maine Outdoor Film festival](#)
- Add seaweed to oyster booth at [Milford Oyster Festival](#)
- [Project Blue](#) at Southern CT State University- student innovation teams think about kelp products and start to design kelp products
- Highlight women in the marketing and education process out front – leaders in this industry
- [ATEC/ACES](#) would be willing to do a couple more seaweed videos in areas that are not covered, especially with women. Looking forward to MAA videos.
- Forming a cooperative (e.g. Long Island)?