New Organization Improves Sustainability of Global Fisheries

Ocean Outcomes Looks to Russia and Asia to Increase Supply of Sustainable Seafood

Portland, OR -- Ocean Outcomes, a new, global fishery improvement organization, announced its official launch this week at the Seafood Summit in New Orleans, LA. Incubated and launched by the Wild Salmon Center, Ocean Outcomes – or O2 – is an international group of fishery experts who work hand-in-hand with high-risk commercial fisheries to increase the supply of sustainable seafood.

“The demand for sustainable seafood is at an all-time high, but sourcing options are limited: the majority of the world’s commercial fisheries remain at risk,” says Rich Lincoln, Executive Director of Ocean Outcomes. “Many of these fisheries operate at the margins of profitability -- they have a lot to gain from improving their practices, but need support to do so. We can help-- Ocean Outcomes gets down in the trenches with fisheries to help design and reach sustainability goals.”

“We are proud to launch Ocean Outcomes,” says Guido Rahr, President and CEO of the Wild Salmon Center (WSC). “The future of wild fish depends in large part on conservation-minded commercial fishermen and local communities. Creating conservation agreements while opening up new markets for these fish has been a breakthrough for us with salmon fisheries-- especially in Asia and Russia. This move allows us to take the successful fishery improvement model we developed for wild salmon and expand it to other wild fisheries.”

Fisheries With the Highest Margin for Improvement

High-risk fisheries face a multitude of challenges, including poaching and illegal fishing, habitat destruction, hatchery production, and bycatch. These fisheries can also see a big upside from improvements, both in rebounding stocks and rising value of the fishery. It all starts with fishermen buying into a shared roadmap to improvement.

“Without fishermen participating in the improvement process, it won’t be a sustainable fishery,” says Brian Caouette, Founder and Director of Programs at Ocean Outcomes.

Ocean Outcomes will focus its initial work in Russia and Japan, regions that house globally important fisheries with strong opportunities for improvement.

“Both regions are tough environments for those unfamiliar with the local cultures or politics,” explains Caouette. “Figuring out how to get local buy-in is the big step.”

Caouette addresses these issues in a panel discussion he will lead at the Seafood Summit this week. He and his panel members will discuss how the Far East will determine the future of global fisheries and what these fisheries are doing to become more sustainable.

"Japan has a long history of fishing. It’s part of our culture. That’s why it’s so important for us to work with people who understand the Japanese mindset and Japanese fisheries,” says Kazuhito Fukuda, the Deputy Director of Sales for the Hokkaido Federation of Fishermen’s Cooperative, which manages the largest chum salmon fishery in the world. “The O2 team understands this: they work with us, not against us, as we strive for more sustainable fisheries."
Hand-in-Hand with Commercial Fishermen
Ocean Outcomes is founded on the premise that successful fishery improvement requires local support and must provide tangible benefits to the communities and commercial fisheries involved. The organization’s leaders and staff have a long history of working with fishing communities in Japan, Russia, and North America to achieve sustainability certification and fishery improvements. For example, they helped fisheries in Russia develop innovative observer programs to curb poaching. And in Japan, they worked with fishing communities to conduct stock assessments and removed old dams to improve salmon runs.

“We’ve been working with the O2 team for over six years. They understand our problems,” explains Dmitry Matveev of Taranai LLC, a fishing company based in Sakhalin, Russia. “They know all of our businesses, the entire essence of the obstacles that we face in Russia. They help us analyze the problems, address them, and relay this information to others.”

Building Connections in the Supply Chain
Ocean Outcomes also connects improving fisheries with buyers and stakeholders interested in sustainability.

"As an international seafood company, we have a stake in the health of global fisheries," says Bill DiMento, Corporate Director of Sustainability at High Liner Foods. "O2 helps us develop strategies to work with local seafood suppliers and fisheries to make practical, on-the-water improvements."

Central to these connections is the Salmon FIP Partnership, a collaborative initiative led by O2 which includes leading seafood companies Gortons Foods, High Liner Foods, the Fishin’ Co, Nestle/Purina, and Albion. On the Kamchatka Peninsula, the Partnership has already helped increase the supply of sustainable and improving wild salmon fisheries to half of regional production. In another example, O2 launched its first “Let’s Talk Fish” dialogue last November. This annual event connects all the pieces of a complex supply chain, bringing buyers interested in sustainability to fish producing regions.

“A lot of fishermen don’t know where their fish go after it leaves the docks,” explains O2’s Julie Kuchepatov who has worked in Russia for over 20 years. “We’re building supply chain connections so that fishermen understand the growing demand for sustainable products and reap the benefits of tackling hard conservation problems.”

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Seafood Summit Panel:
Growing Potential for Markets and Production in the Far East
Tuesday, February 10th 2015 - 15:30 Bolden 2 at the Hyatt in New Orleans

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