

Kelp Craze – Fish Factor – Petersburg Pilot – August 7, 2014

Kelp craze – Kelp is the latest crop that fish farmers are cashing in on and Alaska could follow Canada's innovation and success. That country's largest salmon grower, Cooke Aquaculture, recently launched its own line of certified organically grown seaweeds of two different kinds – winged and sugar kelp. They are being sold under Cooke's True North Salmon brand and both can be served fresh or cooked.

The sea plants are grown in New Brunswick's Bay of Fundy in a so called Integrated Multi Trophic Aquaculture (IMTA) farm, along with blue mussels and Atlantic salmon. The floating farms are designed to mimic the natural ocean ecosystem and combine species that require manual feeding (i.e. salmon) with species that derive nutrients from the wastes of the 'fed' species.

Kelp and other aquatic plants sustain a multi-billion industry throughout Asia, and more Americans are adding the sea veggies to their diets. Kelp also is widely used in foods and beverages, animal feeds, cosmetics and, coming soon, bio-fuels.

Alaska seaweeds got a shout out this year when researchers at North Carolina State University found that common plants found in waters and beaches near Sitka are super packed with compounds that fight obesity, diabetes and heart diseases.

Growing more sea plants in Alaska is a focus of a new Mariculture Initiative that is building support for that industry's expansion and enhancement.

"We are broadening the concept of mariculture," said Julie Decker, director of the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation and mariculture project leader. An area of special interest, she said, is Western Alaska, where no mariculture ventures have ever been attempted.

"I believe there are things that can be grown out there – whether it's an enhancement program or private shellfish or sea plant farming – there are things that can be done," Decker said.

<http://www.afdf.org>

<http://www.petersburgpilot.com/story/2014/08/07/dockside/vessel-incident-discharge-act-could-protect-fishermen-from-burdensome-permit/2704.html>