

**Whitefish Committee Meeting**  
**All Hands On Deck 2020**  
**November 11, 2020**  
**11am – 1pm AKST**  
**Draft Minutes**

**I. Call to Order**

Chairman Risher called the meeting to order at 11:03am AKST.

**a. Housekeeping**

The committee viewed an intro video for Veteran’s Day featuring former ASMI Executive Director Ray Riutta.

**b. Roll Call & Introduction of guests**

Present: Chairman Ron Risher, Vice Chairman Frank O’Hara III, Takashi Matsumoto, Rasmus Soerensen, Julie Yeasting, Julia Ying, Merle Knapp, Mike Cusack, Joel Peterson, Trevor Murikami

Absent: Trevor Murikami

Guests: Mela Meixner - Alaskan Leader, Bob Jansen - Icicle, Dan Lesh - Mckinley Research, Alex Babadzhanov - SOGDA Limited, Megan Rider - ASMI, Hannah Lindoff - ASMI, Michael Kohan - ASMI

**c. Approval of Agenda**

Chairman Risher suggest moving the Committee Roundtable (a.) & Species Questions (a., i.) to after Global Updates (d.).

Vice Chair O’Hara made a motion to approve the agenda with the change. Knapp seconds. Chairman Risher asks for a vote to approve. No opposition. Agenda is approved.

**d. Approval of Minutes from October 26, 2020**

Knapp moves to approve the minutes. Yeasting seconds. No opposition. Minutes are approved.

**e. Chair Remarks**

Chairman Risher shared opening remarks and reiterates ASMI’s mission. Thanked the ASMI program directors for joining the meeting today.

**f. Public Comment**

Chairman Risher requested public comment. No public comment.

## **II. New Business**

### **b. Brief Updates from ASMI Program Directors**

#### **i. Domestic Program Updates –Megan Rider**

Rider provided an update from the ASMI Domestic marketing program. Rider shared that the newly redone Cook It Frozen was well timed with regard to COVID and reported that engagement has been very high. Rider overviewed a new Ibotta offer that is linked with the Cook It Frozen campaign. The Domestic program has featured whitefish in retail trade promotions and trade advertising. Foodservice has debuted new chef recipes that focus on chain and independent operations. ASMI partnered with GAPP to execute Wild Alaska Pollock Week earlier this spring in Seattle. The campaign was highly successful. Rider details the new partnership with Barton Seaver.

#### **ii. International Marketing Program – Hannah Lindoff**

Lindoff provided an update on the International marketing program. Unspent marketing funds from last fiscal year were rolled over. Lindoff overviewed the Japan market and how Atka Mackerel has been targeted in the region. The International team is working to develop new recipes as the Covid-19 pandemic has allowed consumers to try new Alaska seafood products including herring roe. China shows a lot of opportunity for yellowfin sole and Lindoff describes trade gatherings that help to share Alaska seafood messaging. Elevated dishes featuring whitefish have been shared in these smaller gatherings. Pollock is a focus for the International program and was featured heavily in a sample box that was mailed to different chefs.

Lindoff reported that there are a lot of opportunities for flatfish in the UK and EU markets. Promotion of yellowfin sole in Northern Europe has increased and the International program has developed new recipes featuring Sole hotdogs. Traditional promotions in Europe has been difficult with lockdowns happening periodically due to Covid. Focus is on packaging to call out Alaska. Frozen product is experiencing a boost at retail and ASMI is looking to extend those purchasing habits beyond the pandemic.

Lindoff requested that the committee members let ASMI know if they have good customers who are willing to talk about packaging and opportunities for fine dining.

Chairman Risher mentioned that the point of origin is very important because often raw whitefish product is reprocessed in another country.

#### **iii. Seafood Technical Program Updates – Michael Kohan**

Kohan provided a program update for the Seafood Technical program and reviews topics from the previous meeting. Updates on topics from the last meeting such as flavor profiles and labeling of organic seafood were shared. Kohan reported that she is working with Oregon State Sea Grant, Ecotrust and Oregon State Food Innovation Center to speak to the quality of frozen product.

A Technical program subcommittee has recently been formed from to address parasites and nematodes. Technical fact sheets are being developed to be able to speak to the parasite topic.

Kohan noted that the Technical Committee will meet to cover more topics on Thursday, November 12<sup>th</sup>.

Knapp asked Kohan to touch on roe and the Technical program activities. Kohan reports that the program is developing materials for roe. Knapp asked if the program is working to develop new products that would appeal to regional tastes. Kohan noted that there is a research capacity within ASMI to assist with this topic and is willing to bring the topic to the Technical committee.

#### **iv. Sustainability Updates – Susan Marks**

Marks shared that ASMI has developed a new sustainability brochure for ASMI. RFM materials have also been updated and are available.

O'Hara asked Rider if there are any challenges to finding flatfish in the US domestic market. Rider responded that the Domestic program would love to expand the promotions for flatfish and will look to O'Hara and the committee for guidance on what retailers are carrying flatfish domestically.

Soerensen asked Rider to elaborate on the Shoppable recipes that the Domestic program has been promoting. Rider responds that consumers are looking for convenient and the recent recipes ASMI has created are simple and straightforward. Shoppable recipes include the feature to add the ingredients in the recipe to a basket for ease of purchase. Soerensen advises the Domestic program to keep focusing on new consumers and how to keep them purchasing Alaska seafood, especially frozen Alaska seafood.

#### **c. Species Updates**

Peterson provided an update on longline Alaska cod. Price elasticity for next year. Prices have been stable. Japan has been waiting a bit longer in the season to start buying. Demand up in October, likely related to decreased Russia volume. Peterson mentions a need for more demand for smaller cod. China has been a bit of a struggle. North American retail markets have been strong. There is concern about Russian product showing up in North American markets. EU markets are tough.

Chairman Risher mentioned that Covid restrictions have made H&G processing domestically has its limitations. Shore frozen has seen a drop in China. Other countries like Peru might be a good option. Demand from China is up but price point is low.

Yeasting noted that with foodservice shut down, that creates an opportunity for breaded and battered at retail. Yeasting also mentioned that consumers may not want to be frying fish at home.

Cusack provided an update on pollock and notes that B season has been challenging with 5% left in the water. Markets globally have been decent.

O'Hara gave an update on flatfish. Yellowfin sole in Japan have been hit with tariffs. Covid deeply affected the foodservice market. Japan is a somewhat stable market and supermarkets sell deep fried or grilled finished product to consumers. Flatfish is doing well in Europe at retail. Rock sole is doing well in Germany at retail. US domestic market is not doing well with foodservice shut down although retail is doing well in the US market. O'Hara emphasizes the need for flatfish marketing in the US market at both retail and foodservice. Ying adds that China has an extra import tax on Yellowfin sole and it is unclear what will happen in the next year.

Matsumoto shared information on pollock roe and reports that the roe market is shrinking every year. Europe has difficult regulations for importing processed foods. Mentaiko is a great opportunity in the EU. Soerensen reiterates that the challenge for roe is getting new markets for the product. Chairman Risher adds that recipe development would also be helpful.

Yeasting shared that there is expected to be an increase in the quota for Gulf rockfish. Requests that additional attention be given to rockfish. Vice Chair O'Hara reports that redfish have just received RFM certification. The European market will be important for redfish although foodservice is a major sector there.

Vice Chair O'Hara updated the committee on Atka mackerel. Most Atka mackerel ends up in Japan at bars and also at retail. Looking forward to an expanded reach in Japan and to diversify to other markets.

#### **d. Global Updates Regarding Whitefish (tariffs/ COVID/ New or Changing Market Opportunities)**

Chairman Risher asked for input that hasn't been discussed in previous topics. No further input.

#### **e. Committee Roundtable**

##### **i. Species Questions from ASMI Executive Director**

The group reviewed and discussed answers to the questions set by Executive Director Jeremy Woodrow

#### **f. Whitefish Training Sessions during COVID?**

Chairman Risher brought up potential whitefish training sessions for ASMI staff and other industry professionals. Cusack asked that we table the topic until the next meeting. Knapp concurs. Kohan shared that the technical program has materials that can help with training.

#### **g. Set next meeting for 2021**

Chairman Risher mentioned that a poll would go out after the meeting for a meeting for the first quarter of 2021.

### **III. Good of the Order**

Chairman Risher thanked everyone for participating and attending the meeting.

#### **IV. Adjourn**

Knapp made a motion to adjourn. Soerensen seconded. Meeting adjourned at 12:56 PM AKST.