

Seafood industry angles for marketing campaign

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
Capital Press

PORTLAND — Oregon's seafood industry is calling on Congress to fund a national marketing campaign that would promote the health benefits of seafood and support commercial fisheries in coastal communities.

Industry leaders sent a letter in April to the Oregon congressional delegation, urging lawmakers to approve \$25 million per year for five years to establish the National Seafood Council and National Seafood Marketing Campaign.

"While commercial fisheries have faced several challenges in recent years, the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on trade, labor, supply chains and restaurants is unlike anything we've experienced before," the letter states.

According to a report from the National Marine Fisheries Service, revenue from commercial fishing and seafood processing declined 29% along the West Coast and Alaska in 2020, compared to the previous five years from 2015-19.

"Unfortunately, our industry needs this boost to rebound from the last two years of COVID-caused economic hardships," the letter continues.

A 2019 study by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and ECONorthwest estimates commercial fishing each year generates 6,848 jobs, \$356.2 million in labor income and \$697.9 million in total economic output statewide.

The Oregon letter was signed by representatives of Pacific Seafood, the Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission, Fishpeople Seafood, Seafood and Gender Equality and the Oregon Coast Visitors Association. It is part of a national push to create the seafood marketing campaign, which was first proposed in 2020 by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee.

Since then, more than 40 seafood



Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press

Seafood stew at the Schooner Restaurant & Lounge in Netarts, Ore. The seafood industry is asking Congress for funding to promote seafood.

producers, suppliers and processors from across the country have come together to form the National Seafood Council Task Force, lobbying Congress to fund the campaign.

"The appropriations process for fiscal year 2023 is really kicking off in earnest in Congress right now," said Matt McAlvanah, the group's campaign manager. "This funding may or may not be included, but the goal is to get it included either this year or in future appropriations bills."

McAlvanah said the campaign would focus heavily on public health benefits to encourage more consumers to buy and eat seafood.

Sonja Connor, research associate professor in endocrinology, diabetes and clinical nutrition at Oregon Health and Science University, serves on the board of directors for the National Seafood Council Task Force's Nutrition Advisory Council.

Over her 40-year career, Connor said she has extensively studied how seafood benefits heart and brain health.

Omega-3 fatty acids in fish are shown

to make blood platelets less sticky, she said, reducing the risk of a clot that can cause a heart attack or stroke. There's also evidence they can reduce blood triglyceride levels stored as fat in the human body.

Eating seafood may also protect eyesight and reduce the risk for mood disorders and depression, Connor said.

"The science is very clear that seafood is important for the optimal health of a person throughout one's life," she said. "It sort of boggles the mind, the far-reaching benefits."

Bill Hueffner, vice president of marketing and development for Pacific Seafood, said the timing has never been better for the industry to launch a unified campaign. For the first time last year, the USDA agreed to purchase \$45.9 million of Pacific seafood to distribute for food assistance.

Pacific Seafood, based in Clackamas, Ore., is one of the country's largest seafood companies. It has more than 2,500 employees at processing, aquaculture and distribution plants in 10 states and British Columbia, Canada.

Bill would direct FTC to investigate beef packers

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press

A bipartisan joint resolution introduced in the Senate would direct the Federal Trade Commission to investigate the extent of anticompetitive practices and violations of antitrust laws in the beef-packing industry.

The investigation would include price-fixing, anticompetitive acquisitions, dominance of supply chains and monopolization.

It would require FTC to report its findings to Congress within one year. That report would include the monetary and other harms to consumers, ranchers, farmers, plant workers and small businesses, as well as recommendations for legislation or other remedial actions.

S.J.Res.47 was introduced by Sens. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., and Mike Rounds, R-S.D., on May 19.

The senators said the nation's meatpacking industry appears to be rife with antitrust violations, with the top four beef packers increasing market share from 32% to 85% in the past three decades.

They also noted an average of nearly 17,000 cattle ranchers have gone out of business each year since 1980 and ranchers' share of the consumer beef dollar has gone from 60 cents to 39 cents over the past 50 years.

Additionally, beef-packing companies have paid millions of dollars to settle beef price-fixing claims in recent years, they said.

"It's time for Congress to get back in the game and use every tool to promote competition in our markets so we can lower costs for fami-

lies..." Warren said.

Rounds said it's critical to determine if violations are occurring or if Congress needs to strengthen current antitrust laws.

In May of 2020, the Department of Justice began an investigation into whether anticompetitive practices have led to the wide disparity between fed cattle prices and wholesale boxed beef prices.

But beef producers and lawmakers have been frustrated because no findings or updates on the investigation have been released.

U.S. Cattlemen's Association welcomes the resolution and notes, importantly, it sets a date for when the report is due.

"We have not yet received the results of the Department of Justice's investigation into the beef industry directed by former Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue. This is completely unacceptable," said Justin Tupper, USCA vice president.

But the National Cattlemen's Beef Association does not support the move, although it fully supports federal oversight of meatpackers.

"This is a distraction at this point," said Tanner Beymer, NCBA senior director of government affairs.

It muddies the waters to involve another federal agency to do what the Department of Justice is already doing, he said.

"The industry, Congress, the agencies — let everybody digest the findings of that before taking further action, drafting new policies or anything like that," he said.

The DOJ is investigating if there was a problem and, if so, to what extent, he said.

Retiring Washington FFA advisor Wallace gives farewell address

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

KENNEWICK, Wash. — Someone once asked Dennis Wallace why he settled for teaching agriculture.

"I never thought of it as settling," Wallace told 1,692 Washington FFA members and guests May 14 during the Washington FFA state convention. "I wanted to teach kids. I wanted to make them see the relevance of agriculture, leadership, citizenship and cooperation."

Wallace is retiring as Washington FFA's state advisor May 31. He's held the position since July 2017.

He started in FFA 54 years ago, as an eighth-grader, when an agriculture teacher recruited him with a home visit during the summer to compete at the county fair.

He later walked into the agriculture classroom, where an inspirational poster caught his eye: "What's an leader?"

An ordinary individual with extraordinary determination."

"Made sense to me," Wallace said. "That told me that anybody could be a leader."

Wallace recalled going to his first national FFA convention as a chapter delegate in Kansas City in the fall of 1969 — the first year women joined the organization.

Two years later, Washington FFA got word from nationals that they needed to also ratify the change, or risk having their charter revoked. Wallace was state vice president.

"You'd think that would be an easy vote, wouldn't you?" Wallace said. "It wasn't — we had two state officers that didn't think it was right, they spoke up against it. We had a divided house."

Ultimately, the members voted to approve the change.

"It's like everything else," Wallace said. "Once you give people the power to engage, they do it."

It stepped up FFA, to the point where the organization wants to continue to be inclusive today, he said.

"You're not a boys' club, you're an all-club," Wallace said. "How do we get FFA more welcoming for all students? How do we get teachers who look like the students that they teach? How can we be more inclusive, how can we be more diverse? How can we be equitable?"

"You know what? That's a problem I'm not going to solve," Wallace addressed the members. "Do you know who is? You guys. You're going to be the ones that are going to find the problems and the solutions to what we're facing today."

The current members' leadership, advocacy and determination will set the course for FFA.

"My goodness, we are the answer to a lot of our woes today," Wallace said.

Some FFA members want

to go into professions that don't have anything to do with agriculture, but Wallace noted that they can continue to support the industry.

"We have a lot of people in Seattle who believe Boeing is the most important industry in the state; you go a little further up to Bellevue and they'll tell you it's IT, information technology and Microsoft," Wallace said. "And yet, those

people still eat, and they're not producing it."

As he and others retire, there needs to be a pipeline of people who want to teach and make an impact, Wallace said.

"We need the best and brightest of our minds functioning at a higher rate," he said. "We need you to solve the problems of the future. We need you to be on board and on task."

Wallace told the members if he was young, he'd love to be in their place.

"You have a chance to be you, whoever you are," he said. "You're accepted, you're welcomed and you're expected to perform. You're expected to be part of a moment that shows that the youth of America is valid, strong and has a voice that carries."

Wash. FFA weighs location of next year's convention

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

Fresh off a successful in-person return, Washington FFA officials will decide in July where the next convention will be located.

Washington FFA's 92nd convention relocated from Washington State University's campus in Pullman to Three Rivers Convention Center in Kennewick because of WSU's policy requiring anyone staying in the dorms to show proof of COVID vaccination.

FFA officials decided to relocate because that's not a public high school requirement, and organizers didn't want to require students attending convention to have a COVID vaccination card.

"Kennewick provided a great alternative venue for state convention and showed us that even with our mostly volunteer staff we are able to put on a convention away from WSU," said Jesse Taylor, executive director of the Washington FFA Foundation.



Jesse Taylor

WSU is still looking at COVID-19 policies for overnight guests staying on the campus, Taylor said.

"WSU is moving forward with the expectation that it will be able to host FFA on its Pullman campus next year, provided that COVID-19 infection rates remain low and stable," said David Wasson, director of WSU News and media relations.

WSU's policies for visitors and guests are updated as necessary based on local conditions for each campus and in consultation with state and local health officials, Wasson said.

Taylor and Washington FFA executive director Dany Cavadini will present their thoughts to Washington FFA's board of directors, who make the final decision. Taylor expects an announcement about location to be

made shortly after the board meeting July 12.

Taylor thought this year's return went "extremely well," given a short planning window and the new location, citing student members and "top notch, competitive and robust" career and leadership development events.

"Our FFA advisors brought over 115 individual chapters to convention this year into the unknown and they were very gracious and flexible with us," he said. "I won't say it was perfect, but it was as close to perfect as we could have imagined given the circumstances."

Taylor further praised advisors for their "flexibility, grace and professionalism."

"These teachers have been through a lot," he said. "Teaching Career and Technical Education through the pandemic was an incredibly challenging feat as it is hands-on education."

The teachers brought kids that were ready to learn and be part of something "incredible," Taylor added.

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