



Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation, Inc.

805 West Third Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
(907) 276-7315
Telex: 26595/AHG

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AFDF ENDS CONTRACT WITH U.S. SURIMI PRODUCER NEW ALASKAN PROCESSOR TO BE CHOSEN

(ANCHORAGE, AK) -- Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation (AFDF) is closing down its commercial surimi production line at the Royal Alaskan/Pan Alaska Fisheries plant in Dutch Harbor, and will seek another Alaskan processor to make surimi for the American market.

AFDF contracted with Royal Alaskan/Pan Alaska earlier this year to produce the first commercially-made surimi in the U.S.. Pan Alaska's parent company, Castle & Cooke, is halting its worldwide seafood operations and plans to shut down and sell the Dutch Harbor processing plant. AFDF seeks to establish a permanent supplier of surimi to the U.S. food market, and so will move its machinery to another plant.

The move will mean about a month's delay for the AFDF surimi project, which was interrupted during the summer months while the pollock were in post-spawn stages.

Phase I of the two-part surimi project was well underway before the shutdown, and more than 10,000 pounds of surimi was produced on a small batch line. In preparation for Phase II, AFDF has purchased a complete full-scale surimi production line, testing machinery, and quality control technology.

Using the experience gained from the early months of the project, AFDF plans to move its equipment, set up the production line, and begin full-scale commercial production by October 1.

AFDF will issue a request for proposals to Alaskan processors next week, and will select a new site in August. The processor chosen will receive a full line of surimi processing equipment valued at \$520,000, and \$450,000 in payment for surimi produced.

The AFDF surimi project is part of an effort by the commercial fishing industry to develop a year-round domestic market for the enormous Alaskan pollock resource, which is now almost entirely harvested and marketed by foreign interests.

Funded by the seafood industry and fishery product import tariffs, AFDF is midway through a \$1.6 million effort to set up the nation's first permanent surimi processing plant in Alaska, and assist the U.S. food industry in developing new surimi-based products.

Since the project began in early 1983, nearly 30 new surimi-based products have been developed by the nation's largest food companies, and more than a dozen are available on grocery shelves.

Surimi is a washed, stabilized protein paste principally made from Alaskan pollock, which is used to make high-protein food products like fabricated seafoods, diet dinners, and extra-protein meats.

CONTACT: Chris Mitchell
Executive Director, AFDF
(907) 276-7315