



Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation, Inc.

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ALASKA FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT CHOOSES EAGLE FISHERIES  
FOR FLATFISH INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

ANCHORAGE, AK -- Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation, Inc. (AFDF) of Anchorage has chosen Eagle Fisheries of Kodiak as the site for a \$250,000 flatfish demonstration project that will create new opportunities for Alaska's fishermen and processors.

During the 12-month project, Eagle Fisheries will test new flatfish processing equipment, experiment with production of value-added products, and test market those products to U.S. buyers. It will be the first concentrated effort in the Alaskan seafood industry to develop new technologies, products and markets for flatfish, which currently are harvested in Alaska at levels exceeding 378,000 metric tons per year, but could supply nearly one million metric tons annually if targeted by fishermen.

"The Alaskan bottomfish boom has provided fishermen and processors with a healthy supply of flatfish, which is a common by-catch of pollock and cod," said Mel Monsen, executive director of AFDF. "But until now, flatfish hasn't brought big profits to fishermen or processors. This project is aimed at targeting new profit opportunities for fishermen and processors interested in expanding their options."

Monsen said an active flatfish industry could also create new opportunities for operators of small trawlers and seiners whose vessel size limits their participation in the burgeoning bottomfish industry. "Eighty percent of Kodiak's local fleet and 25 percent of the statewide fishing fleet fits into this category," Monsen said. "Most of these boats are limited to the summer fisheries, and stay tied to the dock all winter. A strong domestic flatfish industry could keep many of those boats working all year round."

AFDF's flatfish project is also aimed at small to medium-sized shore-based processing plants that are not large enough to accept deliveries from the huge bottomfish trawlers now operating in the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska. "Of the twelve processors in Kodiak alone, only five can accept deliveries of over 400,000 pounds, which is the size of haul the largest bottomfish trawlers deliver," Monsen said. "Most of the large vessels are from Seattle or other Outside ports, and don't deliver to many of Alaska's smaller processors. Our aim in the flatfish project is to help the small and medium shore-based plants profit from flatfish, and then they'll turn to the local fleet for their supply."

For the project, AFDF will provide Eagle Fisheries with a full line of processing equipment valued at \$180,000, along with about \$70,000 worth of technical assistance and production subsidies. Eagle will commit 1,800 square feet of plant space and all line maintenance, will contract for fish deliveries, and will conduct a comprehensive test marketing plan for the value-added flatfish products produced during the project.

Eagle Fisheries, which opened in March 1987, is one of the few Alaskan shore-based plants dedicated entirely to processing bottomfish. Eagle has been hand filleting flatfish since last June, and is selling its product in the U.S. and Japan.

"Working with Eagle gives AFDF several advantages in this project," Mosen said. "They are already dedicated to building a flatfish industry in Alaska, have worked with fishermen using different handling techniques, and they have already made strides in developing new U.S. markets for flatfish products."

Flatfish fillet production for the project will begin in January 1988, after Eagle completes construction of a plant addition to house the flatfish line.

AFDF is a private, non-profit firm established by the seafood industry to direct monies from import tariffs into projects that will enhance domestic seafood industries. AFDF was the primary architect of the U.S. surimi industry and, through its five-year surimi project, provided much of the early impetus for development of the domestic bottomfish industry.

For more information on the project contact AFDF project manager Peter Moore at (907) 276-7315.