

IF: Some Japanese producers say they are looking to using chum salmon for the production of surimi seafood. What is happening as far as the use of alternative species to produce surimi seafood, and are we likely to see a particular species become more popular as raw material for surimi seafood.

JP: Extraordinary efforts to develop surimi from various species will be made.

In my views two species with white flesh – carp and flounder – are new possible resources for surimi.

To be eligible for a surimi resource, the particular species must meet the following three factors: 1) abundance, 2) currently underutilized, 3) economically competitive].

I think carp from freshwater and arrowtooth flounder (Gulf of Alaska and North Pacific) are good candidates.

However, carp has to overcome possible contamination with heavy metals (i.e., lead) and arrowtooth must contend with bycatch issues related to halibut. Various researches in fish protein isolate confirm that fish protein isolate, which can be made from frozen fish, byproducts, or pelagic fish, can successfully replace surimi in making finished products.

I will present a research update – Functional Fish Protein Isolate – at the 8th annual Surimi Industry Forum in May.

IF: Do you expect to see consolidation among the world's leading surimi seafood makers? If so, where do you expect to see the most consolidation Europe, U.S. Japan? Why?

JP: Absolutely possible. A vertically integrated company with surimi manufacturing capacity can move forward to consolidation.

IF: What has been the impact of Marine Stewardship Certification for surimi seafood products?

JP: I do not know if there is any further impact to consumers yet.

IF: In 2006, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a labeling change to allow surimi seafood manufacturers to remove the word "imitation" from packaging and instead use "Crab-flavored seafood, made with surimi, a fully cooked fish protein." What has been the impact on sales of this rule change?

JP: I think it made a significant impact. With its approval on Nov 20, 2006, a significant increase in retail sales was observed in the first quarter of 2007. I do not know what happened during the second half of 2007. With the start of the current surimi supply crisis in the second half of 2007, the estimation of the impact of label change would be difficult.

IF: Japan and Europe seem to put a lot of effort into new product development of surimi. Do you think that kind of effort would pay off in North America? What is the next big new product innovation in surimi anywhere in the world?

JP: The U.S. retail leading companies also introduced surimi seafood with omega-3 oil. Crab sticks have been in our market for almost 30 years. It is true that there is no more excitement.

As our consumer enjoyed fried foods – French fries, fish and chip – I wonder why fried surimi seafood is not introduced to our consumers.

This fried surimi seafood is extremely popular in Japan and Korea.

In Spain, the best selling item is seafood pasta.

We American consumers also enjoy spaghetti or pasta.

Seafood pasta should be a next item to be introduced in the U.S.

During the 8th surimi industry forum, I will serve surimi pasta from Spain to all attendees. It will be served as a stir fry with garlic, olive oil, and chili.



AROUND THE WORLD: The surimi supply shortage is being felt around the world and manufacturers are looking for raw material options other than pollock.

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