CENTER FOR TROPICAL AND SUBTROPICAL AQUACULTURE

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Letter from the Director

Aloha,

As we celebrate the new year by hitting the ground running, I wish you all the best for 2023 and look forward to another productive year of collaboration!

In line with my continuous advocacy for innovation in aquaculture, especially in small island environments, I was pleased to read the recent report in “Modern Farmer” about the creative solutions that oyster farmers are implementing to address aquaculture’s big plastics problem. Even though our industry may only be a small contributor to the global plastics problem, now is the time for all industries to take steps to safeguard our natural resources for future generations. This includes finding alternatives to reduce the use of plastic throughout the production, supply, and consumption chains while balancing the need for increased production.

I was also pleased to read the announcement earlier this month that the University of Hawai‘i Board of Regents voted unanimously to approve the renaming of the UH Mānoa Life Sciences Building after the “First Lady of Limu,” Isabella Aiona Abbott. The vote occured at the Board meeting on January 19, 2023, following a groundswell of support from the campus community. This announcement honors Dr. Abbott’s contributions to the scientific and island communities, and also indicates the importance of preserving Hawaii's seaweed (limu) and supporting CTSA's annual macroalgae funding priority. Click here to read more about this well deserved achievement.

Next month, CTSA will begin to solicit stakeholder input on our next development cycle, so keep an eye out. As always, please contact me with any questions, comments or suggestions.

Mahalo,
Dr. Cheng-Sheng Lee
Executive Director, CTSA

New CTSA Video! Aquaponics at Kahauiki Village

CTSA is pleased to release a new video in our 'Aquaculture in the Pacific Islands' video series.

"Aquaponics at Kahauiki Village" is a short video that profiles the recent CTSA project "Demonstration Aquaponics Unit for Formerly Homeless Village," led by Dr. Jinzeng Yang (PI) of the University of Hawaii CTAHR and Dr. Harry Ako.

Kahauiki Village is a permanent supportive housing community for formerly homeless households operated by the Institute for Human Services (IHS). It was designed to be a modern version of a plantation village with jobs nearby and agricultural crops tended by the residents, and the CTSA project provided technical assistance to start an aquaponics system so residents can grow protein and produce while learning valuable skills and empowerment to seek regular employment.

Connie Mitchell, Executive Director of the Institute for Human Services, had the following remarks during the opening ceremony: “IHS began our efforts at sustainable urban farming about 10 years ago, with

coaching and support of the University's College of Tropical Agriculture, and continues to be blessed by our affiliation to this day. Dr. Harry Ako helped us start our first aquaponic growing system atop the roof of our Women and Families shelter on Dillingham as a way for us to begin a vocational training program for our houseless guests. The urban farm continues to be a venue for teaching shelter guests how to grow food to feed a family AND for learning soft skills in preparation for employment... This [new] aquaponics system will expand the capacity of Kahauiki Village to produce healthy food for our families and as a place of learning about entrepreneurship. Produce grown in this system will be sold at our budding Farmers Market right onsite here at Kahauiki Village."

Click here to watch the video.

Aquaculture Announcements

EPA and Army Finalize Rule Defining WOTUS

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of the Army (the agencies) announced a final rule establishing a definition of “waters of the United States” (WOTUS) to reduce uncertainty from changing regulatory definitions, protect people’s health, and support economic opportunity.

This rule establishes a durable definition of “waters of the United States” that is grounded in the authority provided by Congress in the Clean Water Act, the best available science, and extensive implementation experience stewarding the nation’s waters. The rule returns to a reasonable and familiar framework founded on the pre-2015 definition with updates to reflect existing Supreme Court decisions, the latest science, and the agencies’ technical expertise. It establishes limits that appropriately draw the boundary of waters subject to federal protection.

The final rule restores fundamental protections so that the nation will be closer to achieving Congress’ goal in the Clean Water Act that American waters be fishable and swimmable, and above all, protective of public health. It will also ensure that the nation’s waters support recreation, wildlife, and agricultural activity, which is fundamental to the American economy. The final rule will cover those waters that Congress fundamentally sought to protect in the Clean Water Act—traditional navigable waters, the territorial seas, interstate waters, as well as upstream water resources that significantly affect those waters.

More information, including a pre-publication version of the Federal Register notice and fact sheets, is available at EPA’s Waters of the United States website.

Accompanying the issuance of the final rule, the agencies are also releasing several resources to support clear and effective implementation in communities across America. A summary of 10 regional roundtables was released that synthesizes key actions the agencies will take to enhance and improve implementation of “waters of the United States.” These actions were recommendations provided during the 10 regional roundtables where the agencies heard directly from communities on what is working well from an implementation perspective and where there are opportunities for improvement. The roundtables focused on the geographic similarities and differences across regions and provided site specific feedback about the way the scope of “waters of the United States” has been implemented by the agencies.

The agencies are also taking action to improve federal coordination in the ongoing implementation of “waters of the United States.” First, EPA and Army are issuing a joint coordination memo to ensure the accuracy and consistency of jurisdictional determinations under this final rule. Second, the agencies are issuing a memo with U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide clarity on the agencies’ programs under the Clean Water Act and Food Security Act. Click here to learn more.

Reminder: Sign Up For 2022 Census of Aquaculture

The 2022 Census of Agriculture is right around the corner and USDA NASS is making every effort to count all aquaculture producers in the United States. If you produce any aquaculture products and want to make sure that you are counted in the 2022 Census of Agriculture and the 2023 Census of Aquaculture, please sign up your operation using this online form: https://www.agcounts.usda.gov/cgi-bin/counts/. Once you have signed up, you might receive a short survey in the next two years to further categorize your operation. Most likely, you will not receive a survey until the 2022 Census of Agriculture in January or February, 2023.

AquaClip: Researchers swap single-use plastic with seaweed-based film

The most common technique in the world of food packaging is single-use plastic films. With a little help from

the EU, the SeaFilm food packaging project aims to create a substitute for single-use plastic film in conserving frozen fish. As the name indicates, the new packaging film comes from the sea and is based on bioactive seaweed extracts and edible algae. It helps to conserve frozen seafood for longer while maintaining the quality. A promising project in line with the EU objectives of fighting plastic pollution, reducing food waste and boosting the algae sector.

Anyone who's removed the plastic wrapping from a long-forgotten, dehydrated frozen fish fillet knows the feeling. Too much plastic and too little poorly conserved fish. This was what made the researchers from the Polytechnic University of Leiria in Portugal think about different solutions. Coupled with the problems arising from plastic pollution and restrictions on single-use plastics, the concept of an edible biofilm for frozen fish was born.

The SeaFilm project is looking to provide the industry with a new algae-based edible solution to replace plastic films whilst increasing product shelf life through the incorporation of bioactive seaweed extracts. After defrosting the frozen fish, the biodegradable film can either be disposed of or simply eaten along with the fish. In the latter case, the edible film could even include seasonings to create a meal that is tasty, convenient and easy to cook.

SeaFilm will offer an alternative to plastic with a novel material that helps to differentiate seafood products, reduce food waste and cut the amount of single-use plastics used in the production of frozen seafood. "With the SeaFilm project we replaced synthetic packaging materials for frozen fish with a marine macroalgae-based biomaterial, which will contribute to the reduction of single-use plastic and to the reduction of food waste," say researchers from the Polytechnic University of Leiria.

The material will decrease the environmental impact of seafood freezing whilst actively extending shelf life through the incorporation of extracts from the seaweed Grateloupia turuturu. The film is validated for shelf-life extension in frozen salmon, significantly reducing freezer burn. Recent results indicate that it might also extend the shelf life of seafood after defrosting, by delaying microbial growth. It contributes towards a sustainable final product that is more appealing to look at than seafood wrapped in synthetic plastic film.

Source: The Fish Site // Original Article

This newsletter is written and prepared by the CTSA Information Specialist Meredith Brooks.
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Center for Tropical and Subtropical Aquaculture
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