

Canada's coast providing wide array of seafood for Midwest

By CINDY LADAGE
Illinois Correspondent

COMOX VALLEY, British Columbia — Illinois seafood markets like Robert's Seafood in Springfield have to depend on outside suppliers to fill their inventory. One of the biggest sources for seafood for the United States are the coastal waters of British Columbia, from where more than 100 sustainable seafood products are shipped throughout Canada and exported.

At the June BC Shellfish & Seafood Festival, visitors tasted the locally grown seafood created by celebrated chefs who competed in showdowns, offered culinary samples and cooked for sit-down dinners.

Comox Valley has a thriving fish harbor. Ron Clark, wharfinger for the Comox Harbor Marina, provided a tour of

this harbor that's been sheltering ships since the late 1800s. "There are 117 licensed vessels with 266 with commercial licenses," he explained.

The gamut of seafood raised and caught includes halibut, prawns, shrimp, cod, salmon and tuna. Clark said as in farming right now, one worry for the fishing industry is the age of skippers. "There are not many under 50, because of the cost," he noted.

The Salmon Farmers Assoc. (BCSFA) says salmon is British Columbia's highest-valued seafood product, as well as the top agricultural export. Jeremy Dunn, executive director, explained salmon farming begins with brood stock from wild Atlantic salmon.

Salmon lay their eggs, which are harvested, and when they grow to the smolt phase, they go from fresh to salt water and spend about 18 months in this tank-based system. "We then transfer the fish

via tanker truck to a well boat. They are transferred to floating sea cages and stay there until they are harvest size; it is about a three-year production cycle," Dunn said.

Before being transferred, fish are vaccinated by hand at the hatchery to safeguard against endemic pathogens.

Salmon farms consist of floating sea cages. "We sea-farm on the surface in a size of about two football fields — the nets are 90 feet deep and the ratio is 1 percent fish to 98 or 99 percent water," he added.

Visitors also toured Fanny Bay Oysters. Brian Yip, manager, said the business sports several hats — it is growers, processors and International exporters of farm-raised Pacific oysters and Manila clams. Located on Baynes Sound on Vancouver Island, the area offers some of the world's most nutrient-rich growing areas for oysters and clams.

Fanny Bay has been increasing oyster and clam production every year since 1984, making it the largest shellfish

farm in Canada. As far as distribution, Yip said one-third of its produce goes to Canada, one-third to the United States and the rest overseas — usually to Asia.

Manatee Holdings Ltd. is a geoduck (a type of clam) farm where Eric Gant, one of the world's foremost experts on geoduck aquaculture, led another tour. Manatee Holdings helped pioneer the wild Geoduck Clam Fishery in British Columbia, and it harvests geoducks and sea cucumbers, with a 75 percent profit margin.

Gant is passionate that the industry must change: "Fisheries are collapsing. Thirty-six species have been driven into extinction in Canada alone. More is coming — urchins, sea urchins and seahorses worldwide. It is a socioeconomic pandemic, but there is a cure to solve damage to the ecology in the ocean. But if you push a species too far, you can't bring them back, and there is no need for it."

Besides supplying geoducks to the market, Manatee Holdings is also restocking the ocean.

SPOTLIGHT ON YOUTH

\$79,620 raised for 4-H through Celebration of Champions

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. — The Indiana State Fair Foundation's third annual Harvest Dinner, held August 18 at the Indiana Farmers Coliseum, raised \$79,620 for 4-H youth through the Indiana State Fair's Celebration of Champions.

The Harvest Award was presented post-humously to Mauri Williamson, founder of the Indiana State Fair's Pioneer Village. The award was accepted by Mauri's children, Marsha Mohr and David Williamson. Nearly 650 business leaders, government officials and friends of the fair enjoyed mingling during the cocktail hour, followed by a hearty meal and beverages served in mason jars.

"My dad loved Pioneer Village and the Indiana State Fair and would've been deeply honored to accept this award," said David. "Dad attended 90 Indiana State Fairs, and he only missed three years when he served in the Navy during the Second World War."

The Harvest Dinner also featured one of Indiana's own, keynote speaker "Papa John" Schnatter, founder, chair and CEO of Papa John's Pizza. His presentation, titled "Building Business, Slice by Slice" highlighted several of his experiences leading the world's third-largest pizza delivery company.

In addition, Lane Slaton of Noblesville,

Ind., who won the title of Grand Champion Market Lamb at this year's fair, spoke during the dinner about what it's like to participate in 4-H and what it takes to be competitive. "Practice like you've never won and perform like you've never lost," said Lane, who is in his seventh year of 4-H.

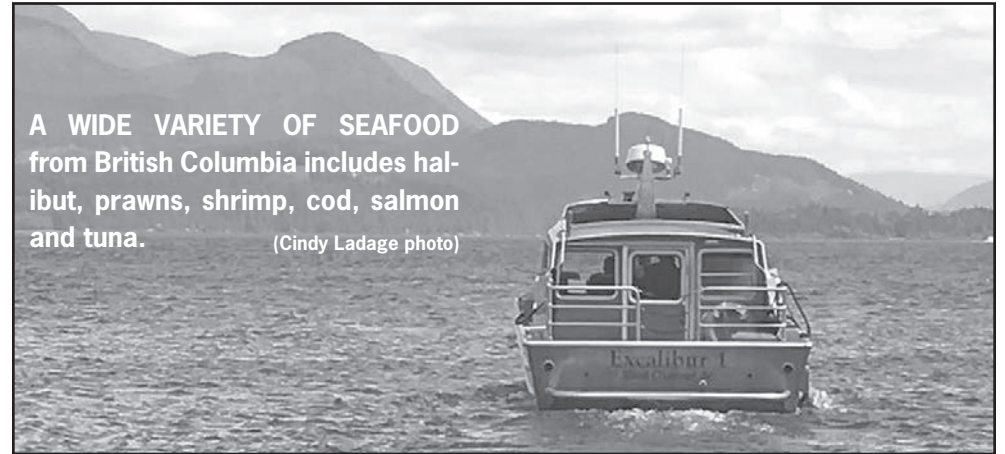
National FFA names 2017 American Star Award finalists

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. — The National FFA Organization selected 16 students from throughout the United States as finalists for its 2017 top achievement awards: American Star Farmer, American Star in Agribusiness, American Star in Agricultural Placement and American Star in Agriscience.



The American Star Awards represents the best of the best among thousands of American FFA Degree recipients. The award recognizes members who have developed outstanding agricultural skills and competencies through the completion of a supervised agricultural experience (SAE) program.

A required activity in FFA, an SAE allows members to learn by doing. Members can own and operate an agricultural business, intern at an agricultural business or conduct an agriculture-based scientific experiment and report the results.

(continued on page 9B)



A WIDE VARIETY OF SEAFOOD from British Columbia includes halibut, prawns, shrimp, cod, salmon and tuna. (Cindy Ladage photo)

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