Institution: Colby College in Waterville, Maine

Food Service Operation Type: food service management account (Sodexo)

Dining Operations: 1,800 undergraduates participate in the meal plan. The campus has three dining halls, one retail cafe and a pub. They also offer catering.

Meals Served Per Day: 8,143

Species served as a part of residential dining program: Gulf of Maine Responsibly Harvested, underutilized white-fleshed fish such as Acadian redfish, white hake, and cape shark (dogfish). Also, wild caught shrimp and both farmed and wild salmon.

Species served as a part of catering program: wild shrimp, clams, Maine lobster, farmed and wild salmon, and farmed mussels

Total Volume Served: 39,000 pounds of white fish are used in the residential dining program throughout the academic year

Frequency Seafood is Served: six times per week

Percent Local Seafood (of overall seafood spending): 25%

Find this case study and others on our website: www.farmtoinstitution.org/blog-categories/case-studies
OVERVIEW OF THE SEAFOOD PROGRAM

In 2003, due to student requests and their own interest in enhancing their sustainability program, Colby College Dining Services chose to focus on offering more sustainable seafood options. At first, they followed the Seafood Watch List from Monterey Bay Aquarium to guide their seafood purchases. In 2010, they began to utilize fish certified by the Marine Stewardship Council in conjunction with Sodexo’s Sustainable Seafood Policy. Starting in the 2015-16 academic year, their dining program has also been licensed by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute in order to serve Gulf of Maine Responsibly Harvested products.

It should be noted that Colby’s sustainable seafood program includes both locally sourced seafood and non-local seafood that meets other established criteria. 95% of the seafood purchased meets Sodexo’s Sustainable Seafood Policy, and many of the products that meet Sodexo’s qualifications are certified by the Marine Stewardship Council.

Colby College defines local food as coming from within the State of Maine, and for seafood, it must come from the Gulf of Maine. They look for products that are verified Gulf of Maine Responsibly Harvested. The Gulf of Maine spans an area between Nova Scotia and Cape Cod, and is predominantly located off the coast of New England. Therefore, the products verified under this program are all local and/or regional. You can see a map of the Gulf of Maine on the GMRI website.

In the 2014-15 academic year, approximately 25% of the seafood purchased at Colby College came from local sources, and the goal for the 2015-16 academic year is 75%.

Because Colby College Dining Services is sourcing from multiple suppliers, they choose what to purchase based on what is most sustainable. This is determined through conversations with their suppliers and third-party labeling programs such as those mentioned above. Other considerations, in addition to sustainability, include the ability to offer a diverse set of seafood options on their menu, pricing, volume, customer expectations, processing, and consistency.

SEAFOOD CRITERIA

The criteria that used to assess and verify a species as Gulf of Maine Responsibly Harvested are included below.

Gulf of Maine Responsibly Harvested Criteria

1. Fisheries are managed by competent authorities and have management plans in place that incorporate a science-based approach to ensure sustainability.

2. If stock sizes are below management target levels, whether due to natural or man-made causes, management plans are established that enable rebuilding within a specified time frame.

3. Sufficient data exists to determine harvest levels.

4. Monitoring and compliance measures are in place to ensure acceptable harvest levels.

5. Enforcement exists to ensure that harvesters follow regulations and to prevent illegal practices and unreported harvest.

For a more in-depth description of the standards, visit www.gmri.org/sites/default/files/gmrh_standard.pdf
HOW THE SEAFOOD PROGRAM WORKS

Colby College Dining Services is able to source their seafood through a variety of suppliers, including the following: Maine Shellfish, Bristol Seafood, PFG Northcenter, and Slade Gorton. Gulf of Maine Research Institute has assisted Maine Shellfish, through its participation in the Gulf of Maine Responsibly Harvested program, in identifying and sourcing underloved species reliably. Because the college has provided a consistent demand for some of these products, it has allowed companies like Maine Shellfish to work with fishermen to provide a consistent supply of species that are plentiful but might not be harvested otherwise, such as hake, dogfish, and others. Currently, Maine Shellfish ensures that any product with the Gulf of Maine Responsibly Harvested label is traceable to ports in the Gulf of Maine region, such as Portland, Gloucester, and Boston. In the future, the plan is to provide more information to Colby about the specific boats that landed those products via the partnership with Maine Shellfish and Gulf of Maine Research Institute.

Because Colby has been purchasing sustainable seafood for over a decade, they have found that the financial impact has been minimal, even though they have added some complexity to the program over the years. On average, they have found seafood, including underloved species, to be priced at a 33% premium over land-based proteins (chicken, beef, pork, etc.). The underloved species that they use are about $4.50 per pound on average.

In addition, Colby works with its student body to ensure that they understand the meaning behind sustainably harvested seafood. Dining Services utilizes point of sale signs with educational information about sustainable seafood, and they offer tastings as well. They have found that educational efforts must be ongoing, because a new group of students arrives every year who may not know about why these choices are being made and what sustainability efforts are underway.
LESSONS LEARNED

Keep an open mind and be sure to look at the actual volume of product that would be used as opposed to the individual cost per pound. The incremental overall costs may not be very great.

Aquaculture may become an increasing opportunity as it becomes more sustainable and better understood.

Be patient, purchasing sustainable seafood can be a “chicken or egg” scenario where the fishermen may not be harvesting the product because there is not a current market and the buyers may not be buying because they are not aware that there is a market. This can be worked out through communication and commitments between the buyers, distributors, and fishermen.

LEARN MORE

FINE’s Farm & Sea to Campus Project aims to increase the amount of local food served in colleges and universities. Get connected with the New England Farm & Sea to Campus Network by visiting www.farmtoinstitution.org/farm-college.

To learn more about farm to institution efforts across New England, visit www.farmtoinstitution.org.

To learn more about underutilized species, see GMRI’s Out of the Blue Program: http://www.gmri.org/events/event-series/out-blue

Colby College Dining Services Sustainability Guide 2015-2016: http://www.colby.edu/diningservices/2014/06/17/dining-services-sustainability-report/