SUSTAINABLE FISHING IN SCITUATE, MASS: MAKING DOGFISH SOSSEXI

THE CONTEXT
Fisheries around the globe face declining fish stocks and many risk collapse from overfishing.

In 2013, fishing quotas for cod and haddock off the coast of Massachusetts were cut by 77 percent to protect the species from endangerment. Meanwhile, local fishermen struggle to make ends meet.

THE CHALLENGE
The fishermen of Scituate, Mass love what they do. But, they catch their allotted quota for popular species in just three months, leaving them without a reliable source of income for the remaining nine months of the year.

In order to sustain their livelihoods, these fishermen need to be able to sell under-appreciated species at a price that covers their cost of operation.

THE PROJECT
Through the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), we are working with the South Shore Seafood Exchange (SOSSEXI), a non-profit community-supported fishery (CSF) that aims to support the survival of Scituate’s fishing industry by re-establishing a strong connection between local fishermen and the community.

In its early stages of growth, SOSSEXI needs to increase membership and demand for underappreciated species, such as dogfish.

THE SOLUTION
We have designed a comprehensive marketing strategy to educate consumers about dogfish as an alternative to cod and haddock, emphasizing its taste and local-sourcing.

From our findings:

60% of respondents have never heard of dogfish.

When given a choice between Alaskan salmon and local dogfish, 83% chose the former.

Consumers prefer “taste” messaging over “local” or “sustainable”:

Dogfish is a sustainably-caught fish: 20%

Dogfish is a flaky white fish similar to striped or skate: 53%

Dogfish is locally caught off the coast of Massachusetts: 28%

53% of respondents prefer the name "Darwen Salmon" over dogfish

THE SOSSEXI DOGFISH MARKETING PLAN

PUBLIC RELATIONS
We are working with The Boston Globe and Chefs’ Collaborative to change consumer perceptions about dogfish and other underappreciated species in the Boston area.

COOKING CLASSES
SOSSEXI will host events with local chefs who will demystify unfamiliar species. Classes will feature start-to-finish preparation and cooking instructions, an overview of the health benefits, and a story telling from local fishing.

NEW WEBSITE
We have initiated the redesign process for SOSSEXI’s website, which will function as a primary tool for engaging new and existing CSF members. Through www.sossexi.org, community members will be able to exchange recipes and learn more about Scituate’s home-grown fishing industry.

CSF FAIR
Modeled on a CSA Fair, the SOSSEXI CSF Fair will help consumers learn about the sustainability, availability, and economic impact of becoming a CSF member. Participants will have the opportunity to sample unfamiliar species and learn more about cooking seafood.

Alex Borschow, Caroline Mauldin, Derek Oliver, and Amanda O’Brien :: Sustainability Lab :: Spring 2013