

Pacific Choice Seafood to be featured on CNBC for innovative waste-reduction efforts

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“This has been a dream of mine for many years,” Rick Harris, general manager of Pacific Choice Seafood, said of the company’s plan to do its part in reducing waste through a new partnership with Converted Organics Inc., which will convert fish byproducts, such as shrimp and crab shells, into organic fertilizer.

“This will be a great thing for the environment. We’re excited as heck about it,” Harris said.

The company’s new partnership with Converted Organics caught the attention of CNBC, which sent journalists to interview Harris on Monday as part of a “Businesses Going Green”-type feature.

For Harris, the move is just one more step Pacific Choice has taken in an ongoing conservation effort. To name a few, Harris recently implemented a “bring your own cup to work” policy in an effort to eliminate paper cups, is working on eliminating all Styrofoam and has begun using Greenshield boxes for shipping.

Greenshield boxes are created by Georgia Pacific and are touted as an alternative to the non-recyclable heavily waxed boxes used to ship such items as meat, poultry and fish products. They are made moisture-resistant by a specialized wax coating that makes them 100 percent recyclable, George Pacific’s Web site states.

Making changes to packaging is one thing, but tackling a new way to dispose of the tons of fish byproducts taken to landfills annually was another, Harris said.

“We could see the value to get it out of the landfills,” he explained, so he got in touch with a company in Gonzales called California Liquid Fertilizer, which converted fish byproducts into organic fertilizer that was gaining in popularity among agriculture farmers in the area.

“We sent some samples to them and they liked them and were interested,” he explained. Soon, the idea grew that a potential partnership could be formed that would be mutually beneficial to both industries.

“For the last year and a half we’ve been talking on a regular basis,” Harris said, and recalled pointing out to his potential new partner, California Liquid Fertilizer owner Peter Townsley, that “there are Pacific Seafoods up and down the coast — who knows how far this will go.”

Then, two weeks before the deal was to be signed and the partnership made official, Townsley sold his company. That was the first Harris had heard of Converted Organics — a Portland, Ore.-based company — which honored Townsley’s agreement to partner with Pacific Choice.

Now, the fish byproducts will be processed on site at Pacific Choice Seafoods’ Eureka plant and shipped to Converted Organics’ new Gonzales plant to complete the manufacturing process.

While the overall amount of byproducts produced has been reduced in recent years due to increased demand from purchasers, Harris said there was a time a few years ago when the company would send 40 to 50 truckloads of byproducts to landfills every year.

“That’s basically gone — over with now,” he said.

“It’s extremely exciting for us,” Harris said of all of the changes being made at his plant.

“It’s a green year for us.”

Harris was told CNBC’s feature on Pacific Choice Seafoods is slated to run on or around May 16.

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