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Aquafeeds

F3 Prize: Putting money where fish's mouths are

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By James Wright

Collaborative fish feed competition a hunt for innovation



Photo by Taurus, courtesy of Adobe Stock Images.

Manufacturers of aquaculture diet products have progressed significantly in recent years to reduce the amount of fishmeal and fish oil in their feed formulations. A competition aimed at driving further innovation in the sector is dangling a major carrot in front of producers, in the form of a six-figure dollar prize.

The competition, called F3, is an experiment, of sorts, to entice aquafeed manufacturers to create and sell a product utilizing zero marine meals or oils.

"The industry has done a great job of stretching the limited [fishmeal and fish oil] supply and producing a whole lot more. But we need more product out there that's utilizing a variety of alternative ingredients. This prize is to encourage that," said Kevin Fitzsimmons, professor at the University of Arizona (USA), which collaborated with the Monterey Bay Aquarium, the New England Aquarium and the organizers of the X-Prize on the competition.

The winner of the **F3 Prize** (<https://herox.com/F3>) – the first company to sell 100,000 metric tons (MT) of aquaculture feed with no marine-sourced meal or oil

by Oct. 5, 2017 – will take home a cash prize that, at the time of this article's publishing, equaled \$103,025. An anonymous donor put up the first \$100,000 but Fitzsimmons said a crowdsourcing element was added and will remain open indefinitely.

"We wanted to put a carrot out there, and get innovative people going and to support what everybody agrees needs to be done," Fitzsimmons added. The money would go directly to a vendor that is "putting out a product that needs to be out there."

The prize money has been transferred to the Monterey Bay Aquarium and must be awarded, by California law, to one of the registered contestants. If no company reaches the 100,000-MT threshold by Sept. 15, 2017, the company with the highest verified sales wins.

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According to Fitzsimmons, contestants must reveal their ingredients list but not their formulation. At least four companies have already entered since the competition was announced at the Global Aquaculture Alliance's GOAL conference in October. Fitzsimmons says additional companies, including some in China, have also expressed interest. Registration is open through April 30, 2016, with samples due by the end of August.

"We're considering the idea that maybe this could be the aquaculture version of grass-fed beef. It's the same concept. Chefs who support those kind of things might be leaders on this and drive demand so that we get that push and the pull from the consumer side," he added.



The first company to sell 100,000 metric tons (MT) of aquaculture feed with no marine-sourced meal or oil by Oct. 5, 2017, will win the F3 Prize.

A target level of zero for marine-sourced ingredient was implemented due to the difficulty of verifying extremely low amounts of fishmeal or fish oil in aquafeeds. "But we can tell if there's no fishmeal in it," Fitzsimmons said. "We're really trying to push innovation." Already, a number of plant-based ingredients have made fishmeal and fish oil substitution a reality, including soy, algae, insect larvae and insect meals, amino acid supplements and single-cell proteins.

Not all marine ingredients are excluded, however. "Seaweed is fine. In fact, that is one we'd be thrilled to see more of," Fitzsimmons added. Animal byproducts and genetically modified organisms, however, are allowed.

For a full list of rules, regulations, deadlines and other information about the competition, including how to register, please visit the **F3 website** (<https://herox.com/F3>).

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