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Veramaris runs away with F3 oil-alternative contest

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By James Wright

Algal oil from DSM-Evonik joint venture poised for major increase in production



Veramaris CEO Karim Kurmaly accepts the F3 Challenge prize for fish oil alternatives at the Global Aquaculture Alliance's GOAL conference in Chennai, India. Kurmaly is flanked by F3 team members Michael Tlusty (left) and Kevin Fitzsimmons.

Veramaris, a joint venture between DSM and Evonik, won the Future of Fish Feed F3 Fish Oil Challenge by a wide margin, selling about 90 percent of the total fish oil alternatives produced for the contest by all participants.

CEO Karim Kurmaly was presented with a \$200,000 prize at the Global Aquaculture Alliance's annual GOAL conference, held this year in Chennai, India. Kurmaly said winning the prize – logging 769,038 kg of the 850,000 kg submitted for the two-year contest – required a lot of “sacrifice” from his team.

“A lot of weekends. A lot of hard work. Work-life balance went out the window. We decided to give it our all,” said Kurmaly, who also credited “courageous” leaders in Norway and Chile who incorporated Veramaris’ natural marine algal oil into their salmonid feeds. “I’d like to thank those farmers that helped us along this way.”

Kurmaly added that the rise in awareness for alternative feed ingredients that do not deplete marine resources has been spearheaded by its retailer partners, including Tesco, Match, Kaufland and others.



Can corn fuel aquaculture's growth? Veramaris says yes

The benefits of omega-3 fatty acids to human health are well known. Fish need them too. To supplement current supplies from wild-caught fish, one innovative venture is turning to the corn fields of Nebraska – yes, Nebraska – for answers.



Global Aquaculture Alliance

“Aquaculture has the opportunity to provide ‘beyond protein.’ The rate of omega-3 EPA-DHA algal oil adoption is accelerating,” Kurmaly told the *Advocate*. “This has all happened in the past 12 to 18 months. Our business model is not only to provide a product solution. We work with all stakeholders along the value chain from farmers, feed millers, processors, certification bodies and retailers to create value and capture value in seafood. We help create the pull and we do this by working along the entire value chain. Supporting to create and capture value is what we do for with partners.”

Norway-based **Mowi** (<https://mowi.com>), the world's largest Atlantic salmon producer, earlier this year committed to test the winning formula from the F3 Fish Oil Challenge, along with China-based Yuehai Feed Group and **AlphaFeed** (<https://www.alphafeed.com>). The companies will provide the results of their trials through the **F3 Feed Innovation Network** (<https://f3fin.org>).

That Veramaris won this contest with production solely from two pilot facilities – one in Slovakia and another in the United States – is doubly impressive given that its full-scale commercial plant in Blair, Nebraska, USA, only came online in July 2019, too late to contribute to the F3 contest. Veramaris has repeatedly claimed that the Nebraska plant is capable of producing 15 percent of the global salmon aquaculture demand demand for the omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA, which Kurmaly said are “essential for brain, eye and hearth health.”

The first F3 challenge, won by **Guangdong Evergreen Feed Industry** (<https://www.aquaculturealliance.org/advocate/aquaculture-feed-producer-evergreen-wins-f3-challenge/>). Co., Ltd., illustrated that aquafeed ingredients and proteins that do not contain any marine resources can be produced at scale. Producing a fish oil substitute, a far more difficult challenge, gives Veramaris an edge, said Kurmaly.

“Our customers prefer an oil. Additionally, our natural marine algal oil has an EPA & DHA concentration above 50 percent that allows customers to provide a final product that is both nutritious and healthy to consumers. Our mission is to provide healthy fish, healthy food, healthy oceans.”

F3 sees itself as more than a contest – it is a collaborative community of aquafeed manufacturers, fishmeal and fish oil alternative makers and others in the aquaculture value chain working toward a solution to eliminate the fishmeal and fish oil bottleneck that could impede the aquaculture industry’s growth.

“I know this is just the beginning for Veramaris and others to address a major bottleneck in supply chain for aquafeeds support healthy farm-raised fish and healthy oceans in the future,” said Kevin Fitzsimmons, F3 Challenge chair and professor at the University of Arizona.

“The network and connections made have been invaluable and more importantly the involvement of stakeholders along the value chain from farmers to retailers and NGOs, has been amazing,” said Kurmaly. “We work with all stakeholders along the value chain from farmers, feed millers, processors, certification bodies and retailers to create value and capture value in seafood. We help create the pull and we do this by working along the entire value chain. Supporting to create and capture value is what we do for with partners.

“There are many courageous leaders amongst the audience who want to do the right thing for a sustainable aquaculture industry. The F3 has been the catalyst required.”

Kurmaly concluded his on-stage remarks at GOAL by saying that the company’s sights are moving beyond salmonids: “We also would like to collaborate with shrimp farmers here in India and elsewhere to take you on this journey as well,” he said. “We want to connect, collaborate and we will definitely commit.”

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