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Trip Report Questionnaire

Agronomy Conference and Expo

August 24, 2026 - August 26, 2026 | Indianapolis, Indiana

Please complete the following and return to karmen@tastemakercomms.com by Aug 31.
You are also encouraged to take and share photos.

- What is your name / your organization?

Briana Murphy, Mariculture Liaison, Chugach Regional Resources Commission

- What was the primary value of attending the event? What did you / your organization gain from it?

I found this conference to be incredibly valuable to attend on a variety of levels. The opportunity to meet growers, agricultural buyers, “blenders”, researchers, soil scientists, and folks working on the regulatory side was highly useful to me. There were several connections who seemed interested in trying samples of CRRP and the Kelp Hub’s biostimulant product and interested in learning more about our process and product. There were a number of other individuals who provided valuable insight about what growers, regulators, and agricultural distributors would be looking for prior to buying, using, approving, or distributing a product.

- What did you learn at the conference that you wish the whole industry knew?

The conference was incredibly specialized and focused on agronomy, which was interesting as it related to the kelp fertilizer and biostimulant market, but not necessarily relevant to the Alaska mariculture industry as a whole; the focus on soil health, yields from terrestrial crops and decreasing expenses (through more efficient use of fertilizers and the methods of application of fertilizers) rendered the conference highly specific for the Alaska mariculture industry focused on developing a product for terrestrial agriculture. Given the importance of biostimulants to the Alaskan kelp product market, I think it’s important to note that regulatory hurdles seem to be one primary obstacle to widespread adoption, sales, and marketing throughout the industry. There have been a surprising number of agricultural bills introduced to congress lately (which some speakers attributed to ongoing conflicts throughout different parts of the world), and the Plant Biostimulant Act has been rolled into the Farm Bill, which is currently in the Senate Agricultural Committee. Currently, at the Federal level, there are only regulations pertaining to fertilizers and pesticides, which leaves a huge regulatory gap for any product that can’t brand itself as a nutrient (and thereby fit into the fertilizer category). Because of the lack of federal regulation, states are taking it upon themselves to establish regulations around the use of the term “biostimulant,”



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leading to a lot of difficulties involving marketing a biostimulant through the US generally.

Given that, one major takeaway would be the importance of engaging in and following policy decisions, either through direct connections with legislators or through lobbying groups, on behalf of the industry.

- How did the conference expand your understanding of the biostimulant market and availability for Alaska kelp? Did you discover any new market opportunities for Alaska kelp biostimulants?

The conference really helped to identify both the position of the biostimulant market and the perspective of growers and challenges they're facing in the current market. The market (for biostimulants) was described by one speaker as "growing but confusing", and was also described as being in its adolescence—not completely new, but still with a lot of room to grow.

2025 CROP BIOSTIMULANT LANDSCAPE



There was a particular emphasis on the lack of regulation surrounding biostimulants, which highlighted the importance of following Federal legislation—the Farm Act Bill, currently in the Senate Agricultural Committee,



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includes an update on the Plant Biostimulant Act, including language to establish regulations around the term. In the absence of federal regulation, states have begun setting their own regulations around the use of the term biostimulant, which leads to a confusing market for retailers hoping to sell in different states. AAPFCO is trying to get states to standardize their regulations, but this is in process.

Additionally, due in part to the lack of regulation, there is a lack of consistent, standardized testing protocols for testing products for “biologicals,” including PGRs or plant growth regulators, which is an important aspect of kelp-based biostimulants. A standard methodology for testing needs to be established, which highlights the importance of making connections with trusted industry experts who can advise on this issue.

The conference was also beneficial for gaining a better understanding of the challenges that commercial growers face in the current market, and for understanding trends and world events that might influence the agricultural market in the future. Growers are facing significant challenges currently due to soaring fertilizer costs because of global events, while crop prices are falling. Farmers are therefore reluctant to increase costs of production, especially by taking a chance on a new product, but increasingly farmers are looking to incorporate biostimulants on their farm to ensure that they’re maximizing access to nutrients in their soil (use of biostimulants among American farmers has risen from 8% in 2020 to 25% in 2025). The EU has implemented carbon scores for production of agricultural products and it is anticipated that the US may follow suit and tax farmers to lower carbon inputs and require farms to use biologicals to reduce soil depletion.

- Given what you learned at the conference, where do you see opportunities for Alaska’s biostimulant industry? Operations, supply chain logistics, marketing, or strategy, etc.

I think given the uncertainty of the market that farmers and growers are facing, due to ongoing global events, the shocks of which will continue to be felt for a long time, and a changing regulatory landscape, in combination with the vast and unregulated market for biostimulants, it seems important to prioritize testing through reliable, trusted labs, and to focus on one clear “mode of action” that biostimulants can provide, then find growers that will need that product. It seems that growers are open to paying for high-value products if their benefits can be clearly and specifically articulated. Specific marketing seems like it would have a much better ROI than generic messaging and reliable testing would build strategic partnerships with trusted distributors and retailers.

- Please write a brief recap of your activities at the conference, including particularly interesting speakers and/or activities.



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On 8/24/2026, attended the evening networking event, and met Russell Taylor, President of the Humic Products Trade Association, speaker on the biostimulants panel. Recommended specific testing for biostimulants and provided an overview of the regulatory hurdles facing biostimulant products currently on the market.

Met Rooted Leaf Agriculture, a company making carbon-based fermented fertilizer who also incorporate kelp into their products.

8/25/2026: Met Bella Shain, from The Fertilizer Institute, who shared fliers on the biostimulant certification process they offer and provided information about TFI's biostimulant council and the biostimulant conference coming up in November.

Attended the keynote of the conference, which included an overview about challenges currently facing commercial growers and anticipating future trends in US agriculture markets.

Attended TFI's session on 4R Nutrient Stewardship which featured a panel of farmers who discussed the importance of extremely precise monitoring of inputs and soil testing. Interesting to hear the farmers' perspective on nutrient management and their concerns.

Attended the panel on the science of biostimulants, which was extremely informative (and the most well-attended session I sat in on, indicating the subject's popularity among agriculturists).

Broke for lunch and ate with farmer and manager of a manure distributor in Ohio.

Attended the Cover Cropping Strategies workshop; interesting to hear about how soil needs can differ greatly even within a relatively small geographic area and can be significantly affected depending on the crop grown.

Attended TFI's workshop on collaborating on fertilizer messaging. Extremely interesting to understand how world events can significantly influence the fertilizer market. (Slides attached)

Attended the evening's networking event; met with a farmer and fertilizer distributor in Illinois, and a fertilizer distributor in Colorado who works throughout the Midwest.

Attended the following day's farm tour—great to see the experimental farms in operation at Purdue University and get a sense of the scale of agricultural



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operations in the area, and how trials are implemented. Also provided a great opportunity to meet other tour participants.

- Did you take advantage of networking opportunities? Please elaborate on any professional connections you established or developed.

Yes, there were several important connections made, including with staff at the Fertilizer Institute, the hosting entity, who is a trusted entity in the agricultural space, and who extended an invitation for an Alaska delegation to sit in on the in-person biostimulant council meeting that will be held at the Biostimulant Conference in California this November.

Additionally, I also connected with Russell Taylor, the vice president of Live Earth, a humic acid mining company and president of the Humic Product Trade Association, and a speaker on the panel "The Science of Biostimulants." He was a great connection and extremely knowledgeable about regulatory challenges facing biostimulants on the market, and extremely helpful in recommending tests to pursue and additional literature to look into.

- Would you recommend attending this conference again in the future, or similar conferences?

I think this conference was highly useful to attend, though farmers, distributors, and policy-focused individuals were participating in agriculture operations at an extremely large scale, certainly larger than what Alaska is currently producing. Also, many participants were farming corn and soy (relatively low-value and massive scale crops) and most growers and participants were farming or based in the Midwest or Southern US, which logistically and economically may not be the most relevant market for Alaskan kelp.

I spoke with researchers and farmers who recommended attending the Biostimulant Conference in California, in late November.

The Regenerative Agriculture conference was also recommended to me, as well as the Eco Farm Conference in California, as it's attended largely by growers from the central coast of California, growing more high-value crops than corn and soybeans, at smaller scales, and obviously closer in proximity to Alaska.