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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?
Nick Stern, Pacific Kelp Company
- What was the primary value of attending the event? What did you / your organization gain from it?

Networking with ag retailers and distributors to commercialize Alaskan kelp/KelpEdge. Of the many ag conferences I've been to, this was perhaps the most targeted set of attendees in regards to commercial and distribution opportunities. We've learned coming from Alaska it's hard to sell to farmers, you need a "trade" partner that already has the trust and relationship with the farmer. Choosing an agronomy conference was a great idea because it turned out that most of the attendees were agronomists for a distributor, ag retailer or coop and that was already selling directly to 10,000+ acres, so very relevant set of attendees.

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

Initially, I thought a row crop conference (Corn, soy, wheat - midwest corn belt) was not a super relevant market for kelp biostimulants so I figured it would be a learning opportunity. I quickly learned that there is significant interest in biostimulants amongst row crop farmers, both conventional and organic. I was also surprised to learn that (estimating) maybe 50% of the agronomists I spoke with worked with kelp in some form or another, mostly coming from *Ascophyllum nodosum* or North Atlantic Kelp. They seemed open to trying kelp products from Alaska.

- 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?

I think there's an opportunity in row crops for Alaska kelp, but I still think there are more attractive near-term, lower hanging fruit markets. Row crops are hard and expensive to break into (require lots of scale and dominated by Big Ag), but the good news is more and more farmers are actually already using a kelp product, so if you were to try to enter the row crop market it would have to be targeted and in the near term be aimed at replacing current supply. One piece of advice an agronomist at Nutrien Ag provided in one of the talks was that with biostimulants you need to be very targeted with why you are using and for what purpose. Lots of farmers are



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interested in biostimulants but are confused by all the options. If you have a tailored approach to farmers and are very clear on when, why and how you use a product they will have more confidence in trying it.

- 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 see opportunities in the supply chain. More and more people are using biostimulants to deal with climate stress and support soil health. Alaska could provide the feedstock or finished biostimulant products to the row crop industry. Some companies I met buy raw, dried kelp to make their products, so raw feedstock would likely have to be dried, which presents challenges in Alaska, but not insurmountable. I see row crops as a Tier 3 opportunity, but if you want to talk about scale, it's the largest opportunity within agriculture.

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

I attended the 4R's of Farming and Biostimulant Panel ([link](#) to schedule). The biostimulant panel was by far the best presentation, which I discussed above. Most of my time was spent networking with the exhibitors and fellow attendees to see if there were any potential distribution opportunities. The conference also host a field tour to visit the Purdue research farms, which was interesting to see and learned more about how they actually farm row crops. This also offered another opportunity to connect with fellow attendees in a more informal setting as well as the researchers at Purdue.

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

Networking was the main reason for my attendance. Most of the attendees were agronomists or somehow related to a distribution partner, so it was exactly the people we were looking to connect with. I probably had good discussions with 10 potential distribution opportunities, with ag coops/retailers and product brands.

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

I will definitely be looking to attend a similar type of conference geared towards agronomists as the attendees seem to be the most relevant subset of the industry for bringing a product to market. I would maybe focus less on row crops and find a more targeted agronomy conference geared towards regions or crops we have testing data in. But if we test well in soybeans which we are doing this year, it could



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be a great opportunity to attend this next year as it was very targeted towards row crops.