

Tiny Fish Co. is exactly that – a small tinned fish company based in Portland, Oregon with the goal to highlight sustainable fish species from the Oregon Coast. As a woman owned operation, there are unfortunately many mountains to climb while navigating within the realm of a male dominated industry. Moreover, the fish canning business is demanding and for logical reason a very guarded industry. While conducting research prior to jumping off the cliff of full fledged business ownership, gaining knowledge about the industry and how it operates was near impossible. I had a telephone conversation with an Oregon cannery owner that began with, ‘Why should I help you? You are my competition.’ While I am a business owner and profit is indeed at the forefront of my brain, I also recognize the opportunity to be of service to the numerous small fishing communities that reside on the Oregon coast. In addition, it is paramount that we educate consumers about the abundant wealth of marine food resources that we have access to quite literally in our backyard. It is with Tiny Fish Co. that I work to bring the increasing need to choose a more sustainable and diverse food option to a national audience.

By having increased access to Oregon seafood and sea vegetables Tiny Fish Co. would benefit from HB2909 in multiple ways. The first is keeping Oregon fish in Oregon, contributing to the economic growth of the local workforce. Currently I use a manufacturer located in Willapa Bay, Washington because, to put it very plainly, there are absolutely no canneries in Oregon that will cater to a small business with bespoke recipes. This manufacturer, however, requires a minimum purchase order of 10,000 units, which is just enough to make a small business owner reconsider their business ventures entirely. The amount of upfront capital required is exceedingly high and makes the idea of success more of an ephemeral daydream.

A minimum purchase order of 10,000 units also means that I now have to source from larger fisheries who have the capacity to fill the multi thousand pound quotas. With the aid of HB2909, building the infrastructure and acquiring the equipment to run a cannery that can cater to a smaller business model would be possible. This would make it conceivable to source more fish from the smaller fisheries operating along the Oregon coast and throughout the state’s river systems who practice more humane and sustainable catch methods.

The commitment of 10,000 units also limits the diversity of fish species that can be sourced. Wild cockles, barnacles and razor clams that litter our coast can’t even be considered for tins at this moment because of the sheer volume required to meet that purchase unit minimum. With HB2909’s help, processing and tinning limited runs of a more vast array of species would be feasible thereby showcasing the full bounty of the Oregon coast.

Working as a chef for almost two decades taught me the value of community. The idea of seeking out the best ingredients within the closest proximity to my location is my natural reflex. I have created this company with these values of community and closeness to the Pacific Northwest, but find myself in a constant battle between generating profit and staying true to these values. Funding from HB2909 would help manage a symbiotic relationship between the often cut throat world of business and the very simple desire to help out a community that is often overlooked and under appreciated.