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Julie Kuchepatov [00:00:04] Hello, my name is Julie Kuchepatov, and I'm the host of this podcast, The Conch. We are rumbling along on our journey with this podcast, talking about seafood and the ocean, and most importantly, we're uplifting some of the incredible people working in the seafood sector, sharing their journeys, the challenges they face and the triumphs they've achieved. Today, we are excited to have an incredible guest joining us, Kim Gorton. Kim is the President and CEO of Slade Gorton, a third-generation, family-owned seafood importer, processor and distributor based in Boston, Massachusetts. Kim has served as Chair of the Board of Directors of both the Gulf of Maine Research Institute and the National Fisheries Institute, or NFI for short, and currently serves as the chair of the NFI Board. Welcome and thank you, Kim, for joining me today on The Conch. Let's get to it.

Kim Gorton [00:00:52] Well, thank you for having me. I'm excited to speak with you.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:00:56] Thanks. I have a couple questions about your family and the family business. And so the Gorton family, as I read, started in the seafood business in 1849. And that is such an incredible legacy. Could you tell us more about the history of your company?

Kim Gorton [00:01:10] Absolutely. So you are correct. My great-great grandfather started what is now Gorton's of Gloucester, the awesome company that makes the yummy fish sticks in the yellow box that you can find in the freezer section in your grocery store. And over the years that company continued to merge with other companies and eventually just became known as Gorton's. It was founded as Slade Gorton, which was my great-great grandfather's name. In 1928 my grandfather, who was at the time working in the business, decided to go out on his own and he left taking his name Slade Gorton and started our company in Chicago. Thus began my immediate family's journey in this incredible industry. In 1955, we moved our headquarters from Chicago to Boston. And continue to grow and expand both the products that we source and distribute, as well as the types of customers that we service in North America over that time period. So today we are one of the largest importers, distributors of fresh and frozen seafood from the United States and from all over the world. And we serve both the foodservice and retail channels in North America, as well as many of the various segments within each. Certainly, I feel extremely proud and fortunate to be able to carry on the legacy of my family and this incredible industry, which I think is something that is very meaningful and impactful in terms of the good that we are able to do in the world.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:02:53] Yeah. Again, that's an incredible legacy and a long timeline that you kind of have to memorize honestly, right, because you're carrying the torch. Bearing the torch. I think that's really interesting. So you're related to the Gorton's fisherman essentially.

Kim Gorton [00:03:07] Yes. And what I sometimes like to say, the Gorton family is alive and well in the seafood industry, but we're not at Gorton's of Gloucester. They are an incredible company run by phenomenal people, and they make yummy fish sticks. What we do is very different.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:03:24] That is true. I was going to ask you if you were related somehow because the name Gorton seems to permeate throughout this conversation and throughout your family, right?

Kim Gorton [00:03:33] Yeah, exactly right.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:03:35] So in my research for this podcast, I read on your website, quote, "Together with our partners in Iceland and throughout the global network of responsible and dedicated fishermen and suppliers, we are committed to reducing waste, regenerating resources, and reshaping the consumer's experience with seafood." Could you tell us more about your company's commitments and how you bring them to life or implement them?

Kim Gorton [00:03:58] Absolutely. The seafood industry and seafood in general is arguably the most complex food system on the planet. And there are so many different dynamics and inputs and outputs that affect the industry. But overall, what we're all trying to do is feed people, and seafood is really going to be how we feed the world with protein going forward. It is single handedly the most environmentally friendly way to do that if you compare it to other animal proteins and even to many plant-based foods. There's a fair amount of debate about that, but when you really get down to the science of it you look at the various factors that would measure that like land use and fresh water use and carbon footprint and feed conversion. There's just no comparison. So what we really need to do is figure out as an industry and certainly we play a role in this at Slade Gorton, how do we balance on the continuum between environmental degradation and global starvation because that is really ultimately the continuum that we're on. And that's what the debate is always about. And the challenge is to find that right place on the continuum where we're able to feed a growing global population with wholesome, nutritious, sustainable food and at the same time do so in such a way that we are not degrading our environment and harming our fragile ecosystem. So when we think about what our role is in that we don't fish ourselves, we don't run, we don't have our own aquaculture operations, but we do have a role to play. There are things that we can do, as can anybody in the supply chain, to help balance on that continuum in the right place. So a few things that we do when we think about reducing waste. One of the things that we talk about with our customers and with our suppliers is something that we would call taking a nose-to-tail approach to utilizing resources. By that, what I mean is how do we get to what I would consider to be a zero waste situation where 100% of the fish that we harvest or that we catch is somehow being used. We are able to do that in some places in the world today. For example, the cod that we source from Iceland, 100% of that animal is used in one way, shape, or form. So that is an example of a fishery that is extremely well managed. They invented seafood sustainability in Iceland. However, waste happens at many places in the supply chain. The fact that we can use 100% of that animal in various different ways means we're not only feeding people, which is part of the goal, but we're also doing so in such a way that we're not creating a waste stream in the process. That's an example of one of the things that we do. There are other things that we do on the market side, working with our customers to help educate them about portion size and about using non-prime sizes when they're planning their menus. There's a lot of things that can be done both on the supply side and the market side to make sure that we work to reduce waste that happens along the supply chain. With regard to regenerating resources, that's really about the sustainability movement. And if you asked 100 different people to define sustainability, you would get 100 different answers. However, we as a company are committed to making sure that we are moving along that continuum so that we're not too far towards environmental degradation. Our philosophy has always been to where we can do work with our suppliers and work with the factories to help move them along the continuum. Typically, just walking away isn't necessarily going to be the right answer because ultimately that doesn't yield the overall impact that we're looking for, which is to help people understand why it is

important that they follow sustainable practices. 97% of what we as a company currently source and sell is already certified as sustainable, whether it be on the aquaculture-side or on the wild capture-side. And the other 3% today is under something called the fishery improvement project of one shape form or another. That is an example of us not walking away. We could say, well, it's not been certified as sustainable, so we're not going to carry the product. But again, we are trying to have an overall impact and engaging with the other stakeholders in those fisheries all the way down to the fishermen, the harvesters, the processors, our other partners and in some cases even our customers to help work as a system to show the people that are managing that fishery and the people that benefit from it all along the supply chain and the value chain, that moving towards a more sustainable model, ultimately is better from an economic perspective, it's better from an employment perspective, it's better from just an overall environment perspective. We take the approach of meeting the stakeholders where they are, and as long as we can continue to move them in the right direction, we stick by them. Obviously, there's a point in time, if that's not possible, where we'll have to walk away from a specific resource. But that's been our philosophy. And then with regard to working to reshape the consumer's experience for seafood, at least in North America, I think that the industry in general has not done everything it can to help make sure that consumers have the information they need to make healthy choices. There's a lot of conflicting information out there about different types of seafood and is it sustainable or is it fresh or is it good for me? And should I buy farm raised fish or should I buy wild capture fish? And at the end of the day, because we're such a diverse industry, we're not one animal, we're not a cow or a pig or a chicken, we're thousands of different commercial species, sometimes vying for the same share of wallet or share of stomach. We sometimes don't work together as effectively as we could to make sure that overall consumers are choosing seafood. So what we tried to do at Slade Gorton, whether it's working with our retail customers or our foodservice customers, is to help make sure that we give them the right information that, where we can, we help them tell the story of where their food comes from. We want consumers to feel good about their choices. We want to connect them as close as we possibly can to their food source. We want to make sure they have the right information. We want to help support them to learn how to handle seafood the right way and to not be afraid to cook seafood. Yeah. It's one of the most versatile and exciting dining experiences you can have. I think during the pandemic, one of the great gifts to the seafood industry was that people were stuck at home and they learned how to cook seafood more than they had before. And I think that we've seen coming out of that pandemic, people are choosing seafood when they dine at home more often than they did before. So again, we continue to try to make sure that consumers can feel good about choosing seafood and that we provide them with the right information so that they're not just kind of feeding their bodies, but they're feeding their soul as well and giving back to the community and feeling good about what they're purchasing.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:11:27] Yeah, that's great. And thanks for that really comprehensive answer because everything you said really resonates and we've had people on the podcast in the past that have talked about reducing waste and nose-to-tail eating of seafood and the lack of effective consumer marketing, because like you said, the industry is so complex and seafood is complex in general. Everything you said definitely resonates and it's interesting to hear that's not a confirmation, but your experience is really closest to the industry that can confirm what we've been hearing from others. I also read that understanding the carbon footprint of your products is important. This is a really great area that I'm really interested in is around climate change and how does climate change actually factor into your company's sourcing decisions?

Kim Gorton [00:12:18] I'd say that climate change is really sort of the 800 lb gorilla in the seafood industry. It's something that is obviously continuing to evolve. I think there is in some areas we have really strong understanding of its impact on fisheries. For example, in the Gulf of Maine, whose waters are warming 99% faster than any other place in the world. And we can see some of the impacts that that having on fisheries populations. What we hope to be able to get to is, therefore, what are some of the things we can do about it? There's certainly no question that it's going to continue to affect fisheries populations. It's going to affect migration, it's going to affect where and from a wild capture perspective, seafood is caught. It's going to affect where we can develop aquaculture resources in terms of where is the right environment, where is the right access to resources to be able to do that in a efficient and an effective way? But I think we're just in our infancy as an industry in terms of really starting to get our arms around what is the impact, how will it impact various fisheries and what, importantly, we can do about it. I think that in terms of how it impacts what my company does is it's really about sort of going where the fish are harvested in a sustainable way. So I can give you an example. Cod was the birth of fisheries in the United States and in New England. It's the product that sort of launched my family into this industry in 1849. However, over the last 10 to 15 years, the resource in the western North Atlantic has really suffered. There's no commercial fishery for it here now, but it is something that consumers love to eat. We source our cod from a number of different places, but a lot of it actually comes from Iceland. And as I said earlier, Iceland invented seafood sustainability. They are, the cod fishery there is one of the most well-managed fisheries in the world. Fish is so important to the country of Iceland that a fish is on their coins, not a president. And so it's really about finding those places that manage their fisheries well, that have multistakeholder engagement, that aren't afraid to make decisions and be able to work with those partners to continue to support their efforts, which at time means that there's less product available or that pricing is higher. But it's ultimately the right thing to do for the planet. In terms of the carbon footprint. I think it's also something that as an industry we're also trying to get our arms around overall. Seafood does have a lower carbon footprint than other land-based proteins and again, as I said earlier, in many cases plant-based foods. However, it's not something, for example, we as a company are really looking at in depth for each species right now and using as a marketing tool. It's certainly something that we need to start to get our arms around a little bit more. With innovation and technology come opportunities to obviously reduce your carbon footprint. A lot of what we're doing in that area right now as a starting point is really looking more at the logistics side of things. The pandemic taught us nothing else in the food industry, at least in seafood, have taught us that the global supply chain is a system that can't be managed by its individual parts. And one of the things that we learned is about opportunities to increase the efficiency of how we move product around the world. And there are lots of things that we're doing with regard to how we forecast, how we optimize inbound product coming into the country, or if it's in the country, how we optimize where it's located to kind of keep the miles off the fish and in stock the fish. And that is all going to have the impact of reducing fuel usage. It's going to ultimately, I think, have a positive impact on an overall carbon footprint. But climate change in general is something that as an industry, I think we need to define exactly what it is that we can do to reduce the impact of climate change. And importantly, how are we going to continue to have access to the healthy protein that seafood represents.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:16:58] In my opinion, this is the most critical question that we have in front of us. And so I really look forward to seeing how you and others great minds come together and kind of tackle this and hopefully will create some, like you said, innovation and ways to deal with these problems that are, like you said, only going to continue because we're not going to solve the crisis of climate change by ourselves by any stretch

of the imagination. You mentioned during times of COVID, and you also mentioned when the transport and the getting seafood around the world to where it needs to go is a system. And so I wanted to refer back to an interview with Seafood Source with you. It was from 2021. And, you know, the thick of the pandemic and you were asked about the state of the seafood industry and you said that the global supply chain is in a state of fairly significant disruption right now. Long order lead times, production capacity constraints, reduced ocean freight capacity, clogged ports, warehouses and a shortage of trucks, which when combined have added significant costs and the need to plan much further ahead. So I don't see these dynamics letting up anytime soon. Have things gotten better since that conversation?

Kim Gorton [00:18:10] So many things actually have gotten better, but there still are some significant challenges and some of the challenges on the production side have eased up in many parts of the world in terms of plants being open and access to labor and ocean freight has started to smooth out a little bit in terms of availability. Ports aren't as clogged as they once were. However, we are still having some challenges with regard to things like cold storage facilities are at max capacity and then some here in the United States, which then backs up product, increases order lead times. Access to raw material is still a challenge in some parts of the world, not so much due to the pandemic, but to geopolitical issues. So, for example, when Russia invaded the Ukraine, we rightfully, as a country, banned imports of Russian products. Well, if you look at things like cod and pollock and other key raw materials, Russia produces, their fisheries anyway, produce a significant percent of the global product. So not having access to that product has really served to kind of shift some of those dynamics, and it served to increase dramatically prices of some of those products. And so we still continue to have some challenges in that regard. But I think that all in all. It's starting to smooth out. At the end of the day, we called it the bullet effect and you can't just abruptly stop and then restart what is such a complex global system without having significant consequences. I think one of the things that we realized as a country during the pandemic is some of our infrastructure was antiquated, our ports, many of them anyway, are not equipped to handle large ships. They're not equipped to turn ships around as fast as they could. Our truckers are aging in this country and there aren't new people in the labor pool who want to be a truck driver. Having access to the right labor has become challenging. So I think that we've learned a lot. We're certainly making investments to make sure that it continues to be smooth, but it's by no means what I would consider to be as smooth as it possibly could be. Certainly, there have been collaborative efforts within the industry working together, even with some of our competitors. We call these pre-competitive issues where we together go and meet with people in the government to try to advocate for improved infrastructure, for improved regulation on steamship lines, and to help make sure that we can keep product moving. It's really, again, at the end of the day, we're trying to feed people, we're trying to keep our protein affordable and accessible to consumers. One of the most heartening things that came out of the pandemic for me was to see the level of collaboration and cooperation and care that people in our industry kind of undertook to try to get through this challenge together. It's one of the most heartening parts of what I do, is to be able to compete on a day to day basis, but when the going gets tough, people need to band together to see what's possible. When we're able to do that because we're all trying to do the same thing, which is to increase accessibility of what is such a healthy protein for consumers.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:21:43] That is something that I also observed and saw constantly was the amount of collaboration and really support of each other trying to get through this really critical time. It was pretty great and that's what makes this industry so amazing in my mind. I ask this question of everyone who comes on the podcast who is working in industry

because I find it really interesting as I come from the nonprofit side of the seafood movement. So here it is. So the environmental and human rights nonprofits make a lot of demands of the seafood industry, right? And the list is long, and I imagine it can get really tedious and tiresome on both sides of the relationship. So what is something that nonprofits should know or need to know when dealing with seafood businesses, particularly when making requests around environmental and social responsibility?

Kim Gorton [00:22:36] That's a great question, actually. Thank you for asking it. And that's an example of step one, which is to ask the question.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:22:43] Yes.

Kim Gorton [00:22:44] Probably the most important thing that can happen is that nonprofits involve key industry stakeholders early on, and it goes both ways. I think at the end of the day, you know, I talked about that continuum, balancing on that continuum, and it is a continuum. There is no place on it that is necessarily exactly right at any given time. But we can't let perfect be the enemy of good. If we all really want to have an impact, the only way, the only way we're going to be able to do that is if we work together. And the most effective way to do that is to get people together early on. There may be violent disagreement in terms of what success looks like or really what is the ultimate goal or more importantly, how to do it. But I think that you just go back to sort of classic problem resolution where you start with the things that we can agree on. What can we agree on? So I'll give you an example. IUU fishing is a big issue globally. It's an issue that we grapple with in terms of as importers in the United States, it's an example of where the stakeholders did not get together to engage. So we have a regulation now called the Seafood Import Monitoring Program, which is about to be expanded. It is completely ineffective. It is added tens of millions of dollars of cost and work and inefficiency into a system, and it has yet to produce one case of IUU fish entering the country. Yet, we are going to expand the program to other species and to more data because it's been a mandate from the White House, obviously working with various environmental NGOs. So if we started with what is the goal? Well, the goal is to stop IUU fishing. There is nobody in our industry, at least here in North America, that would argue that we would not want to do that. We are all for doing that. What we are for also is making sure that we actually put in place effective programs to stop it. And there are lots of other, more effective ways that we could do that. So I'll come back to what I started with is it's on both sides. It's really on both industry as well as the nonprofit community and honestly as well as government to get together in a room and hash it out. And let's talk about what we agree on first. What is the goal, what is the objective, what can we agree on. And then let's have an open and honest debate about the best way to do it. Let's talk about the tradeoffs. There are tradeoffs and it is about balancing on the continuum. But if we move too far in one direction on that continuum, we're going to be in the wrong place. So my request for my own industry, as well as anyone in nonprofits, is that please, just engage us. We're not the enemy. We're not all bad people. I think that we'll find that 90% of the time we have the same objective and that's what we need to focus on.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:26:00] That's great advice. For listeners that might not know the acronym IUU, I just want to say it's illegal, unregulated, and unreported harvest, so illegally harvested fish. You represent the third generation of your family in this business working at Slade Gorton. And so, I wonder, were you always destined to work in the family business? Give us a glimpse of your career path.

Kim Gorton [00:26:24] So that's a great question. And I actually get asked this a lot. I think the answer is my plan had not been to work in the seafood industry. I had two degrees in college. I studied political science as well as art history. And coming I thought that I wanted to be a lawyer and then quickly thought that I wanted to do something more creative. So when I left college, I went into the advertising industry. That was when I was probably about, I don't know, maybe 23 or 24, my father came to me and said, Hey, if you want to try the family business, you're welcome to come in. There's no pressure, but if you want to try it, now is probably the time. You figure out you don't like it, you know, you're young, you can always move in a different direction. He said however, what you need to understand is you're going to have to start at the bottom. You're going to have to work at six in the morning. You're going to basically have to work on the loading dock. And for whatever reason, that sounded appealing to me. And so I very, very quickly as kind of down and dirty and sort of grungy and crazy as that was back then, it absolutely resonated with me. And I think the reason why is because I felt like early on what we are doing was very tangible and it was meaningful. If you think about Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Right above sort of safety is food and water. Being in a business, feeding people, particularly something that's so nutritious and wholesome and healthy and has so many benefits as seafood, just felt like something that really mattered in the world. So I think I was able to connect with that. The other piece of it was this industry is so interesting and dynamic and mysterious, and along with that comes the same type of people, the people in the global seafood industry at every possible level and across every place I've seen are just fascinating. They have incredible stories. And so being part of that makes me feel like I'm part of something bigger. And I think that those things really resonated with me. So I did a tour of duty and several sort of different aspects of our business. I left to go to business school, which was very helpful in terms of sort of just, you know, understanding some of the basics of managing a business. And my career from that point on has been sort of this good balance of using some of the tools that I got from attending business school. But more importantly existing in the real world and existing in real challenges in dealing with real people. And so I've been incredibly fortunate along my career to have a few key things that I think have contributed to my success. I'd say the first is I have an incredible nucleus of a family, and by that I mean my mother and my father and my brother and now my children. I was brought up in a family with a mother who just embodied grace and a father who was just always pushing us to be the very best version of ourselves that we could be. We were encouraged to try anything growing up. And coming into the business was just an example of that. I've never kind of thought there was something I couldn't do if I really wanted to do it. And I've been fortunate enough to have a family that supported me in pursuing this career path. My brother is my best friend. He also works in this business, but there hasn't been a single fight since we were teenagers, certainly not one in the business. We don't embody some of the dysfunctional family business you read about out there. My father has been the most incredible mentor and the most incredible support of me. Sometimes it's hard intergenerationally to pass the torch.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:30:35] Sure.

Kim Gorton [00:30:35] I've never experienced that. He's just let me go. He's never once sort of stepped in the way and said, You can't do that or you shouldn't do that. That's not to say that some of the decisions I've made maybe weren't the right one, but he's always been an incredible support. And now just sort of seeing my children who are on their 20s, be proud and supportive of what I do. I'm a single mom. I have been for a long time, and I think that people would often say, Oh, you know, I don't know how you do it. And the honest answer is sometimes not that well. It's hard to kind of balance those things. But I think if you were to ask my children, they would say, we're proud of our mom, we are proud

of what she does. Yes, there are some times when we wish things had been different. But I've been very fortunate for that. I've also been fortunate to have an incredible team of people here at my company and honestly, just across the industry, people with whom I've developed relationships: customers, with suppliers, competitors. You know, with various people in our trade association that have just enriched my experience in the industry, opened my eyes. There's not a day that goes by that I don't learn something new in this industry. And I think at this point in my career, one of the things that is becoming more and more important to me from which I am deriving a lot of satisfaction is this idea of sort of mentoring and passing along some of my experience. I don't necessarily have all the right answers, but being able to mentor sort of the next generation of people that are coming up in the industry and any aspect of it is something that early on probably wasn't on my radar, but increasingly it's on my radar now and it's something that is probably more rewarding to me than almost anything at this point, which sometimes surprises me. There's nothing I love more than being able to tell someone on my team or even somebody not in my company you know you did a fantastic job and here's why. Or here's a different way to look at things. It feels great.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:32:45] Yeah, that's great. SAGE specifically is definitely planning in the future to create some sort of mentoring program because we have heard the incredible need for that in this industry, in the sector as well as a lot of people, I would say tenured industry professionals you know, they really want to be mentors, but like you said, they might not even know how. Right? And so there's almost an aspect of training the trainers that needs to happen too. But like you said, just simply giving a thumbs up and saying you did a great job and here's why is super powerful. Seafood and Gender Equality or SAGE is about building gender equality and empowering people in the seafood industry. And so I was curious if you could share one or two aspects of the industry and its culture that may contribute to inequality in the sector, and what are some things that the industry can do to lessen these inequalities?

Kim Gorton [00:33:40] It's a great question, and it's one that. I thought a lot about. And at the end of the day, I think what it comes down to, at least from my perspective, is that seafood is kind of what I call an old trades industry that has literally evolved over centuries. By and large, seafood is dangerous, it's rigorous, it's highly unpredictable. And so way back in the day, it probably wasn't well-suited for women who wanted to or needed to raise a family. And I think combined with that, the industry for a long time was really kind of like the wild, wild west, sort of anything goes, even when I started it very much like that. I mean, some of the stories that I will never share blow your mind. And I think, though, that that's changed. I've really seen a change in the last 10 to 15 years. You know, more women making careers in seafood.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:34:35] Yeah.

Kim Gorton [00:34:36] Just going to the various, you know, industry conferences that we have, the Seafood Expo North America or some of the other global seafood market conference. There are more and more women there. The more and more young women there there more and more young people there, which I think is also important, is sort of getting the next generation of people in there. So I do think it's changing.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:34:57] Yes.

Kim Gorton [00:34:58] I think some of the things that the industry can do, you know, one of the things that I love to see is National Fisheries Institute has its Future Leaders

program. And each year, it's great to see so many young people, but so many young women as part of that who are interested in the industry. I think that we as an industry have a huge opportunity to continue to kind of attract smart, vibrant people. It's a dynamic industry, but there are so many people out there, men and women included, who love a challenge and who are really interested in where their food comes from and how to do that in a more sustainable way. And so I think that as an industry, we started to highlight some of the dynamics and some of the challenges that we have in feeding people, that it's started to attract more people and you've started to see more equity in terms of the overall participation. That said, hopefully what happens over time is that there are opportunities for the people that choose to do so, to continue to grow in the industry and if they are interested in it, to have a career path, whatever that looks like, whether that's giving sideways or up or in a different direction, I think it also comes back to what we just talked about, which is mentoring and I think that I've been fortunate to have a handful of incredible mentors throughout the years. Men and women. We are a world that's lots of different people and lots of different ideas, and I think it's about being open minded.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:36:41] Yeah.

Kim Gorton [00:36:41] One of the principles I live by came from Stephen Covey, which is seek first to understand and then be understood. And so I think the greatest gift that we can give is to seek first to understand. And that's going to just open up the world to different people's ideas and different people's thinking. And we might not always agree. But we can agree to hear people out. And I have seen that change in the industry in their 35 plus years that I've been in it. So it's encouraging.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:37:10] Yeah, that is encouraging. And I do appreciate the Young Leaders program at NFI and I appreciate individual and collective efforts. And of course SAGE is here to also, I call it spur the evolution of industry. That's maybe overinflating the task because I think it is on an evolution as it is. You are one of the very few women CEOs in the industry and in an executive leadership position. And so I was curious, how can SAGE help you as a woman in the industry?

Kim Gorton [00:37:40] I think probably the best thing that you can do is to highlight accomplishments of women in the sector who merit recognition.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:37:50] Mm hmm.

Kim Gorton [00:37:51] And focus on the positive, de-emphasize maybe a little bit the glass ceiling. And I'm not suggesting that SAGE is doing this, but I just think in general talking about and highlighting the good that happens and the possibilities and the opportunities in the industry and highlighting. The women that have been successful and have a voice and have something to say. Of course, there's going to be challenges, but there's honestly challenges for anybody.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:38:22] Right.

Kim Gorton [00:38:23] And I think that having that positive talk and be the change that you want to see in the world. So let's talk about what we can do. Let's talk about the good things that are happening. Let's talk about how we pay it forward. The more we can emphasize those things, I think we're going to kind of move in the direction that we want to move in. And it's just my personal philosophy of how to get there.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:38:48] That's really great advice. Our mission is to uplift and amplify diverse voices in the seafood industry, and this podcast is one of the main ways we do this. So I'd like to give you the opportunity to uplift someone. So who would you like to uplift and why?

Kim Gorton [00:39:03] I think I would like to uplift Sylvia Wulf of AquaBounty. She is the CEO of AquaBounty. AquaBounty is in the business of raising genetically modified salmon. They have been at it for probably over 20 years now. I first met Sylvia when she was at US Food Service. She is one of the most smart, dynamic, solutions-oriented, bridge-building people I have ever met. She just is this incredible person who I've learned so much from, who I've been fortunate enough to get to work with in various different capacities now. And just as somebody that I think is a tremendous role model for not just other women, but I think just in general for people that are contemplating a career in seafood. Her job is not an easy job for a variety of different reasons. But she just has this amazing way about her. She's just got this, like, sparkle in her eye. She's extremely gifted in terms of sort of interpersonal dynamics. And she's somebody that's a great example of someone who build bridges and who stops to say, I might not agree with this other individual, but how do we find a way forward together? How can we find things to agree on so that we can actually have an impact? So she's somebody, I would say would be a fantastic person to uplift.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:40:29] Well, thank you for that. So we've come to the end of our time here. Our conversation is over. And I just want to say, again, thank you so much for joining me and sharing your wisdom and sharing your experiences. And I think this isn't the end of our conversation. I hope to have many more and I will definitely see you in Boston, I hope.

Kim Gorton [00:40:49] Well, thank you for having me, Julie. I look forward to seeing you. And thank you for doing what you do to highlight diversity in our industry and to help move us in the right direction.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:40:59] Thank you for tuning in to The Conch podcast. It would be amazing if you could take just 2 seconds to leave a review and share this podcast with your ocean loving friends. Thank you.

Crystal Sanders-Alvarado [00:41:13] The Conch podcast is a program of Seafood and Gender Equality or SAGE. Audio production, engineering, editing, mixing and sound design by Crystal Sanders-Alvarado for Seaworthy. The theme song "Dilation" is written and performed by Satan's Pilgrims. Funding for The Conch podcast is generously provided by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and Builders Initiative.