



Paine & Partners eyeing seafood investments for new fund

By Drew Cherry

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Seafood's most prominent private equity group has three deals in an advanced stage, several others identified for new \$893 million fund, top exec tells IntraFish.

Private equity group Paine & Partners, owner of Seattle-based Icycle Seafoods and Norway's Scanbio Group, has made itself a household name in the seafood space over the past several years with its relentless research on the sector and continual interest in nearly all aspects of the industry.

The group's newest fund -- with \$893 million (€748 million) in capital commitments from investors -- has the potential to shake up the seafood space, and Kevin Schwartz, president of Paine & Partners and a founding partner of the firm, told IntraFish it is already closing in on deals in the space.

IntraFish: How will seafood investments feature in the new fund?

Kevin Schwartz: With the closing of Fund IV, Paine & Partners continues to identify investment opportunities across the seafood value chain. Deploying a thesis-driven approach, Paine & Partners has significant experience investing in the seafood and aquaculture industries, which are underserved by private equity and play key roles in meeting the increasing global demand for efficient and sustainable protein sources.

Paine & Partners will continue to leverage its ability to complete complex transactions and its deep operating bench to drive growth and unlock value across the seafood and aquaculture industries.

IF: Any sense what portion of the fund would be in seafood-related investments?

KS: Paine & Partners makes investment decisions based on where it identifies value, and we see significant opportunities in the seafood and aquaculture industries.

IF: Are there any specific targets identified by Paine & Partners within the seafood sector that would be a good fit for the fund?

KS: We can't comment on specific investment targets. We have over thirty active deals in our robust pipeline, three of which are at an advanced stage, and we will continue to identify investment opportunities across the seafood value chain.

IF: Does the employment of John Binde indicate P+P will be looking at salmon farming or Norway as part of the fund?

KS: John brings tremendous operational and leadership experience in the aquaculture industry, and he is helping us identify new investment opportunities.

We continue to seek investment opportunities across the seafood value chain, including salmon farming, in both Norway and in other markets around the world. Of note, Paine & Partners has a presence in Norway with Scanbio Marine Group, a leading Norwegian producer of fish protein concentrate, fish meal, and fish oil.

IF: Will Paine & Partners continue to focus on the upstream area of the value chain? Will wild fisheries or aquaculture be of more interest?

KS: We will continue to focus on the upstream sectors of the agribusiness value chain and will also pursue opportunities downstream where we have developed specific investment theses. Our investment in Icycle Seafoods is a good example of our interest in both wild fisheries and aquaculture as the company is a leader in both. We continue to pursue new investments in both segments in addition to our focus on the upstream part of the seafood value chain.

IF: When will Paine & Partners begin the process of exiting Fund III?

KS: Fund III is fully invested. We exit investments once we believe we have maximized value for the company and our LPs.