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BEER WASTE proving a good fishmeal replacement? Entrepreneurs highlight future bottleneck

New Belgium Brewing Co. - based in Fort Collins, Colorado (USA) - has found another outlet for the leftovers of their beer brewing activities:

fish feed. Three Colorado entrepreneurs from Oberon FMR Inc. are investing hundreds of thousands of dollars to convert the wastewater from New Belgium's brewing operations into a high-protein ingredient to feed farm-raised fish.

The trio say they anticipate on the rise of tilapia & salmon aquaculture

but see a niche in alternative feeds as supplies of fish such as anchovies and menhaden are getting tighter due to limited wild catch.

Oberon's vision is to become the premier supplier of high-quality single

cell protein (SCP) destined for use in animal feed diets which it says it has used to successfully grow tilapia thanks to a proprietary process.

"We can't support the growth of the aquaculture business using fish to feed fish," said Randy Swenson, CEO of Oberon FMR Inc. "The business we're in is fish meal replacement."

Oberon is teamed with the Colorado School of Mines and New Belgium to brew up its "fish meal replacement" at a pilot production plant at New Belgium in Fort Collins.

The firm says on its website that currently, treatment of dissolved and fine-particulate food processing by-products occurs under conditions that promote bacterial growth using the entrained by-products as carbon and nutrient sources. However, these bacteria are well below usable feed

grade. Oberon's Proprietary process utilizes the processor's existing water treatment infrastructure to produce feed grade SCP.

The goal is thus to obtain a protein-rich biomass, which then will be dried into granules and added to fish feed, reducing the need for fish meal in the feed.

If successful the process could also be used in other protein rich waste streams and be exported to countries in need of alternatives to fish-based ingredients in aqua-feed. A subsidised pilot has been set up in Bangladesh, a key aquaculture country.