

Louisiana Direct Seafood Puts the Freshest Catch in the Hands of Consumers

Delcambre Direct, an online program connecting local fishermen to seafood consumers in the Vermilion Bay area, has been so successful that it has expanded into three new regions and now includes educational programs to help revitalize the industry. The program will also share in a \$1 million challenge grant awarded by Blue Cross Blue Shield. As of May, Louisiana Direct (<http://louisianadirectseafood.com/>) is the umbrella site where people interested in purchasing the wild catch of the day can learn about top-quality shrimp, crabs and finfish available in Delcambre, LaFourche/Terrebonne, Cameron and the New Orleans area.



“We expect it’s going to take some time to catch on,” said Thomas Hymel, a Louisiana Sea Grant and LSU AgCenter Marine Extension agent. “In Delcambre, it started with one fisherman, now everyone is in. We’re getting the word out to the fishermen on one end and to consumers on the other. It’s really a game changer in the shrimping world because they can make a nice profit at that price point selling to the consumer.”

Prices for Louisiana seafood like shrimp have been depressed for decades due to rising

fuel costs and competition from cheap imports. Shrimpers acting as retailers would garner a higher price for their product, but the process was not always easy. Selling a boatload of seafood a few pounds at a time in the “ice chest market” could take days, and locating interested consumers was a challenge – so most fishermen opted to sell to wholesale docks at a lower price. This option ensured a quick turnaround of the whole catch, but was far less profitable for the shrimper. It also was a disincentive

to spend money on measures like extra ice to ensure seafood remained as fresh as possible.

Hymel calls this the “commodity problem,” and it is one of the issues he is combating with the Direct programs.

“Now it’s a traffic jam when a boat comes in at Delcambre,” Hymel said. “When a boat comes to dock, people know. Now it takes hours instead of days to move product. The public demands a higher quality, pristine-looking product, so that’s what they’re bringing to the dock. That’s a big deal. Quality enhancement is happening at the fisher level because there is an immediate incentive for them to participate in that way. Fishermen know they’re getting paid for quality – it means money in their pockets.”

After receiving website training, fishermen set up online profiles at the appropriate regional Direct site. Potential customers can view the profiles, and fishers post online notices when they will be at the dock and list what seafood they will have for sale.

“We do not want this to have a price-deflating effect so we ask that no prices are posted online,” said Anne Dugas, Louisiana Direct’s new research associate who is working full-time on the project. “We want each fisherman to set his own price.”

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Consumers Net Vermilion Sweet Shrimp

Buyers came from as far as Baton Rouge to get a taste of Vermilion Bay Sweet White Shrimp during the Delcambre Shrimp Festival, held Aug. 15-19.

Vermilion Bay Sweet is a pilot project of the Delcambre Direct Seafood program. Festival goers purchased more than \$7,500 of the hand peeled, deveined frozen shrimp landed by Louisiana fishermen and packaged by Gulf South Inc. in Intracoastal City. This was the first time fresh-frozen shrimp was offered for take-home sale at the festival. Shrimpers were paid a premium for the shrimp used in the pack.

“This is another avenue for shrimpers and processors from the southwest Louisiana region to connect with consumers and showcase the topnotch quality of Louisiana seafood,” said Thomas Hymel, Louisiana Sea Grant and LSU AgCenter Extension agent and director of the coast-wide Louisiana Direct Seafood program.

“DelcambreDirectSeafood.com has helped local shrimpers rebuild their businesses and improve their bottom line by selling fresh-off-the-boat seafood direct to the public,” said Hymel. “This project takes the direct concept to the next level – providing an additional opportunity to sell locally branded premium frozen shrimp to meet the year-round demand.

“We are constantly striving to offer value-added projects that help our fishermen succeed,” Hymel added.



Louisiana Sea Grant and LSU AgCenter Marine Extension agent Thu Bui discusses Vermilion Bay Sweet Shrimp with an interested festival goer.

Vermilion Bay Sweet Shrimp packaged for sale.

“It’s not just a website, it’s a comprehensive program,” Dugas explained. She said information for consumers detailing how to shop for, cook and store seafood is in development, and a host of fishermen are learning about quality improvements and the rules and regulations of seafood retailing.

That education is expected to have farther reaching impacts.

“We trained over 100 fishermen in the quality aspect of all of this with the Louisiana Direct Seafood Academy through a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation,” Hymel said. “Out of these meetings, we are creating

an educational video so fishers across the state can benefit from the training we do locally.”

The Twin Parish Port Commission, LSG and the LSU AgCenter developed Delcambre Direct in 2009. The expansion into Louisiana Direct was made possible with a \$550,000 grant from the Gulf States Marine Fisheries commission in June 2011.

Consumers can take advantage of the program by registering for the newsletter at their regional site, while fishermen are encouraged to participate in the Louisiana Direct program by contacting

their local LSG/LSU AgCenter Marine Extension agent. A staff list can be found online at www.laseagrant.org/adserv/ext/agents.htm#agents.

In August, Delcambre Direct, the Hopkins Street Revitalization Association, the Iberia Development Foundation and the Twin Parish Port Commission announced the award of a \$1 million Blue Cross Blue Shield Challenge for a Healthier Louisiana grant to fund the development of an open-air fresh seafood and farmers market in Delcambre. Funds will also be used to establish a temporary satellite market on Hopkins Street in New Iberia.

Blue Cross Blue Shield awarded the grant in an effort to prevent childhood and adult obesity. It will support both the markets and local nutrition education programs encouraging people to add more healthily prepared seafood and fresh fruits and vegetables to their diet. Hopkins Street Revitalization Association will also use the grant for a home gardening program and to promote more active lifestyles.

On the web:

Louisiana Direct Seafood
<http://louisianadirectseafood.com/>

Challenge for a Healthier Louisiana
<http://ourhomelouisiana.org/programs/challenge/>



Certified Louisiana Seafood Is on the Way

Authentic. Genuine. Certified. The Real Deal.

That’s what fishermen and seafood vendors want consumers to seek out when they buy wild seafood. And a new program established by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) will stamp shrimp, crabs, finfish, oysters and crawfish harvested in Louisiana as “Certified Authentic Louisiana Wild Seafood.”

“The program builds on the growing desire for quality local or regional foods,” said Jon Bell, a seafood specialist and food science professor with Louisiana Sea Grant and the LSU AgCenter who is working with LDWF on the branding project. “The average American eats 16 pounds of seafood a year. That number is certainly higher in South Louisiana. Yet, most Americans don’t realize that 80 percent of the seafood they consume is imported.

“When you walk into a seafood market, grocery store or restaurant, it’s nearly impossible to know if what you’re about to eat was fished out of the Gulf of Mexico or the Gulf of Tonkin. This program tells you that the seafood comes from Louisiana,” Bell said.

The process will begin at the dock. When a licensed commercial fisherman lands his catch in Louisiana, a processor participating in the Louisiana Wild Certified Seafood (LWCS) program marks the container with the program’s “Authentic” logo or identifier. That mark then follows the product all the way to the buyer.

But the program is more than just verifying the seafood is from Louisiana, it also promotes maintaining a quality product from the moment the catch hits the deck, through dockside processing to final wholesaler processing. “The program branding and marketing is geared



toward attracting customers. Consistent product quality will keep them asking for the seafood, and hopefully paying more for it,” Bell said.

To that end, Bell, LSG Extension assistant Julie Falgout and LDWF personnel are developing a training video and other materials to help industry participants maintain seafood quality and keep their products topnotch.

“This isn’t going to be a difficult program to participate in,” said Falgout. “Really, if you are doing what you’re supposed to do by following federal and state regulations, you’re in. And if you follow some best practices, you’ll have premium seafood that will draw top dollar.”

Authentic Louisiana participation is voluntary, but LDWF officials hope that most seafood vendors will register. Participants will have to complete a brief online training when the program is rolled-out later this fall in order to use the LWCS Authentic logo. “It won’t be difficult,” Falgout said of the training, “but it will have its rewards.”

Louisiana Sea Grant Research Update

Green Dispersants Focus of Sea Grant Specialist

Three Louisiana State University scientists received a \$500,000, three-year grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to study the feasibility of producing “green” dispersants for future oil spills in the Gulf of Mexico. LSU AgCenter faculty Andrew Nyman and Chris Green and AgCenter and Louisiana Sea Grant faculty member Brian LeBlanc will begin their research this year. Their project is titled: *Bacillus subtilis* Biosurfactants with Potentially Lower Environmental Impact for Salt Water Applications. Iowa State and Colombia universities are also collaborating on the project.

The study will attempt to produce oil dispersants that have less of an impact on the wetland environment. A genetically modified strain of a common bacterium, *Bacillus subtilis*, will be used in the initial research. The scientists believe that modifications to the bacterium, using various fermentation energy sources or genetic modifications, can produce a by-product that will effectively disperse oil without the unwanted impacts to the ecosystem that might occur with traditional dispersants.

Four low-value agricultural feedstocks – bagasse, soy hulls, soy fibers and crude glycerol – will be used in the study to grow two hybrid strains of *Bacillus subtilis* with the objective of producing higher yields of biosurfactants and isoforms (dispersants) through green chemistry principles. The researchers anticipate that these by-products will be less toxic and have greater biodegradability compared to Corexit, the

synthetic surfactant used during the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Corexit is effective; however it has moderate toxicity, according to the EPA and other groups.

The possible toxicity of the researchers’ green dispersant formulas will be evaluated using juvenile and larval Gulf killifish (*Fundulus grandis*).

Additionally, the team will conduct community outreach activities to illustrate the relative toxicity of crude oil, a synthetic dispersant used commonly today, a common detergent and naturally dispersed crude oils. The demonstrations will be conducted in communities affected by the 2010 oil spill. Published manuscripts will disseminate results to the scientific community, and factsheets will be published for the public.

On the web:

www.laseagrant.org/research/dispersantresearch/index.html.

New Study to Gauge “Vulnerability and Resilience of Threatened Coastal Louisiana Communities”

What makes a community better able to recover from a natural or manmade disaster? What factors leave a community more vulnerable to ongoing environmental changes like sea level rise, coastal erosion and salt water intrusion?

An ambitious new collaborative research project at LSU aims to find out by interviewing residents and employing socioeconomic data from the American Community Survey from the U.S. Census to examine preparedness, vulnerability, resilience, adaptability and sustainability in a social context.

“The coastal situation is near crisis or in crisis right now,” project principal investigator Matthew Lee said. “We need to understand how these coastal communities are going to weather this crisis. I believe that they will.”

With funding from Louisiana Sea Grant, Lee, Troy Blanchard and Tim Slack of the Department of Sociology, along with Jeff Carney of the Coastal Sustainability Studio and Kirby Goidel of the Departments of Mass Communication and Political Science and the Public Policy Research Lab at LSU, seek to evaluate an ecological transect of LaFourche and Terrebonne parishes that include diverse communities.

The two-year project began in July and is in its early stages. The first challenge is to develop effective survey instruments that will return valid, useful information. Researchers plan to involve Sea Grant Marine Extension personnel in that part of the process and in locating potential survey respondents.

Lee said he expects interviews will be conducted by telephone and in person, and the researchers’ goal is to garner responses from 1,000 households. The desire is to reach a diverse group of people within varying distances of the coast.

One focus of the project will be social networks. This term refers not to online communities like Facebook, but rather to local links among people and to those outside their immediate community. Lee said researchers are interested in learning about the number and quality of extra-local contacts an individual has because in times of trouble, it is likely a person’s contacts within close physical proximity will be equally affected and may be unlikely to provide the most aid. Lee said he expects to find that communities that have stronger extra-local ties are ultimately going to be more resilient.

“This is an extraordinarily adaptive part of the country,” Lee said of South Louisiana. “They have a different understanding of their relationship to the environment. The water has always been at their doorstep.”

Researchers hope their work will be useful to inform local planning efforts, particularly in light of the implementation of the Louisiana Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast.

On the web:

Louisiana Sea Grant Research
<http://www.laseagrant.org/research/>

Louisiana Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast
<http://www.coastalmasterplan.louisiana.gov/>

Oil and Dispersant Biodegradation Researched

Deciding to use a dispersant to combat a marine oil spill or simply allowing nature to do the job is often a choice between the lesser of two evils. Not using a dispersant potentially threatens marshes, birds and other coastal animals if the slick moves landward. Using a dispersant dissipates the slick, but keeps the oil in the water column, threatening fish and other marine creatures.

Adam Kuhl, a researcher with the LSU AgCenter Aquaculture Research Station, is studying the effect of dispersants and salinity on the biodegradation of crude oil in laboratory-simulated marsh. Oil biodegradation has been a topic of interest throughout the Northern Gulf of Mexico since the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. To determine how quickly dispersants and oil degrade, Gulf killifish (*Fundulus grandis*) were exposed to different dilutions of water and Corexit (the dispersant used during the Deepwater Horizon event), water and oil, and Corexit/oil/water mixtures at different salinities following different biodegradation periods.

“At recommended dispersant to oil dilution ratios from the manufacturer, the dispersant initially is more lethal to the fish than the oil,” said Kuhl. “But after about four weeks, the lethality of the dispersant is gone.” At 16 weeks, the oil and dispersant are no longer lethal but it still can affect organs in the killifish, he added.

The next phase of Kuhl’s research is studying the effects of oil and dispersant on microbial communities living on the water bottom at varied salinities. Several species of microbes thrive on crude oil and feast on the natural oil seeps in the Gulf. For this portion of his work, funded by Louisiana Sea Grant, Kuhl is sequencing DNA taken from sediment-associated microbes collected from the Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge. “The sediments from Rockefeller are as uncontaminated as possible when it comes to exposure to oil along the Louisiana marshes,” he said.

From the DNA, Kuhl and his collaborators – which include researchers at Texas Tech – can determine what microbes are living in the sediments and the size of their populations, establishing a baseline. Then after exposing those microbes to oil, dispersant and oil/dispersant mixtures at various salinities following one to 16 weeks of biodegradation, DNA in the sediments are again analyzed to see which microbial populations increased or decreased.

With this work, Kuhl hopes to examine the changes in microbe populations, determine if Corexit breaking down the oil alters microbial growth, and if so, how salinity can affect it. His results – which should be available this fall – could then serve as a tool for oil spill responders, helping them better determine which is the lesser of the evils.



Dispersants and oil



Gulf killifish were placed in containers and exposed to various levels of crude oil, Corexit and water salinities.

Allen Appointed Laborde Endowed Chair

Standish Allen Jr. has been named the Laborde Endowed Chair for Sea Grant Research and Technology Transfer by the Louisiana Sea Grant College Program (LSG). His appointment is through June 2013.

“Dr. Allen is a world authority on bivalve breeding. I’ve been collaborating with him since 1993, beginning with our initial triploid oyster development for Louisiana,” said John Supan, associate professor and director of the LSG Oyster Hatchery on Grand Isle. “It’s been a rewarding relationship over the past 19 years, as Stan and I have worked together to bring advancements in oyster production to the Gulf of Mexico region.”

During his tenure as Laborde Chair, Allen will spend much of his time at the hatchery assessing the facility’s oyster broodstock and spawning system capabilities and developing plans for breeding program activities. Since 1990, the hatchery has focused on improving Louisiana’s oyster production through research and technology transfer. Current efforts are focused on an oyster breeding program for the Gulf of Mexico region. One outcome of the breeding program has been

the production of triploid oysters, which have three sets of chromosomes unlike normal (diploid) oysters that have two. Triploids are sexually sterile. Therefore, from June through November when diploid oysters are expending energy to spawn, resulting in lower meat yield, triploid oysters remain meaty and are more marketable.



Standish Allen Jr.

Triploids can be created artificially by manipulating oyster chromosomes. A chemical may be momentarily used to trick the developing fertilized egg to keep a set of chromosomes it would normally eject – resulting in a triploid. However, this method, as well as heat shock and pressure methods, does not make all the treated oysters become triploid.

The chemical manipulation method also can be used to create tetraploid oysters, which have four sets of chromosomes and can sexually reproduce. When bred with diploid oysters, tetraploid oysters produce 100 percent triploid offspring. Those tetraploid oysters will serve as part of the hatchery’s broodstock.

Allen is professor and director of the Aquaculture Genetics and Breeding Technology Center at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, College of William and Mary, in Gloucester Point, Va. He also is an adjunct professor at Rutgers University in New Jersey. He earned his doctorate in fisheries from the University of Washington in Seattle, and his Master of Science degree in zoology from the University of Maine in Orono. His B.S. in biology is from Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pa.

The Laborde Endowed Chair for Sea Grant Research and Technology Transfer enables Louisiana Sea Grant to bring highly qualified scientists to LSU to focus on marine and coastal issues critical to the state. To date, eight internationally recognized researchers have been appointed to share their expertise on topics such as microbial life in extreme environments, coastal wetland restoration, seafood sanitation, waste stream processing/utilization, mercury contamination in coastal waters, and the mechanics of debris under hurricane-force winds.

The Laborde Chair was established at LSU in 1994 with a gift of \$600,000 from Tidewater Inc. and a match of \$400,000 from the Louisiana Board of Regents. John P. Laborde served as Tidewater Inc.’s chief executive officer for nearly 40 years. He was the founder and first chairman of what is now the Offshore Marine Service Association and played a major role in the worldwide development of the offshore service industry.

LSU Doctoral Student Named 2013 Knauss Fellow

Ryan Orgera, a Louisiana State University Department of Geography and Anthropology graduate student who will complete his Ph.D. in environmental geography this December, has been named a Knauss Fellow for 2013.

The Knauss Fellowship, sponsored by the National Sea Grant College Program, provides a unique educational experience to graduate students who have an interest in ocean and coastal resources and national policy affecting those resources. The program matches fellows with hosts in government legislative or executive branch offices in Washington, D.C., for one year.

Orgera earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in French and a Master of Arts degree in French studies from the University of South Florida in Tampa. He is fluent in French, Italian and Spanish, and conversant in Swahili. He has worked as a hazards mitigation and coastal management research associate in the LSU Disaster Science and Management Center for nearly three years, as well as a French instructor at LSU since 2008. He also taught English in France during the 2006-2007 academic year.

“Simply put, my foremost professional goal is to work toward a sounder model of sustainable marine stewardship,” said Orgera.

“I pledge my unique skills as a marine geographer, editor, linguist, author, researcher and community leader to any task that leads to a

healthier marine ecosystem. I am drawn to public service to be able to effect positive change in how we treat and manage marine spaces, and I can’t think of a more distinguished way to start this career than as a Knauss Fellow.”

Orgera said through Congressional hearings, court decisions, executive orders and legislation, he discovered that a pattern of reverence for the terrestrial wilderness emerges but not for the oceanic environment. “This research will be invaluable to closing that gap,” he added.

Orgera is one of the 51 fellows selected nationwide for 2013. He was nominated for the Knauss Fellowship by the Louisiana Sea Grant College Program, and is the first LSU geography and anthropology student nominated by LSG.



Ryan Orgera

High School Students Chronicle the History of At-Risk Coastal Communities

The Louisiana Sea Grant Coastal Change Oral History Project is launching with the new school year. The project objective is to collect oral histories from people living in at-risk parts of southern Louisiana while simultaneously involving the youth of these communities in their own cultural past.

“High school students will go into the field in groups or pairs to interview the people who have personally experienced the coastal and environmental changes that are threatening to overcome Louisiana,” said Darcy Wilkins, LSG research associate managing the project. “Not only is the land rapidly disappearing, but with every square mile of earth that succumbs to the Gulf, the culture that has thrived in southern Louisiana is swallowed up as well.”

Before heading into the field, students will learn about the science behind the issues affecting Louisiana’s coast, as well as the ins and outs of conducting oral histories from Louisiana State University Hill Memorial Library Special Collections director Jennifer Abraham Cramer. Four schools are involved in the project. Sue Ellen Lyons, Lonny Ellzey and Warren Bernard will lead the Orleans Parish Holy Cross High School students. David Sneed, Jed Pitre and Jenna Galjour of Thibodaux High School in Lafourche will head the project with their students. Vanessa West and her yet-to-be-determined partners will lead students at West St. Mary High School in St. Mary Parish, and Tina Savoie will be the lone leader of her class of environmental science students at South Cameron High School in Cameron Parish.

“Oral history is a powerful tool of relatability and understanding,” said Wilkins. “Figures and scientific evidence are, by and large, abstract concepts, so for many people numbers on paper are far removed from reality. The human story, however, is almost universally relatable. Though the figures

of South Louisiana’s wetland loss are shocking, and the scientific predictions of where we will and will not be 50 years from now are utterly devastating, those numbers and facts don’t always move people the way fire behind the eyes and conviction of speech can.”

Full audio recordings of each interview will be archived at Hill Memorial Library and made available online at the Louisiana Sea Grant website. Students also will share what they’ve learned in creative ways. Their end products could

be original songs, portraits, short documentaries, research papers, models, replicas of how things once were, and the list goes on and on. “The main product desired from this project is inspiration – to do, act, change and get involved,” Wilkins said.

For teachers and others interested in collecting oral histories, video training and a variety of other pertinent materials are available on Louisiana Sea Grant’s website at www.lamer.lsu.edu/oralhistories/. The videos discuss the technical aspects, as well as nuisances, of conducting an oral history interview.



Students learn how to conduct oral history interviews from LSG’s Darcy Wilkins (left).

Water, Water Everywhere, but Few Management Policies in Sight

Louisiana has an abundant supply of water, but how long will it last? Will climate change, the demands of less water-rich states, the increasing thirst of industry and the need for river diversions for coastal restoration leave the Bayou State struggling to safeguard its most basic, life-sustaining resource in the future?

These questions, as well as ongoing water battles among states like Georgia, Florida, Alabama and Tennessee were the impetus for Mark Davis and Jim Wilkins to explore water law

in Louisiana and beyond. Davis is a senior research fellow and director of the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy at Tulane University School of Law, and Wilkins is the director of the Louisiana Sea Grant Law and Policy Program at LSU.

“Louisiana has not, historically, had any kind of comprehensive water policy,” Wilkins explained. “We need to look a lot farther out on how we are going to use our water and protect the water resources we have. Fresh water has become a strategic resource that increasingly pits the interests of the places that need it against the places that have it. As Mark Twain said, ‘Whiskey is for drinking. Water is for fighting.’ In Louisiana there are some temporary authorizations for water sales but nobody really owns surface water in the sense that they can have exclusive rights to use it and sell it.”

With support from Louisiana Sea Grant, the pair is conducting a survey of water management policies throughout the nation to see which strategies will be most effective in Louisiana and which should be avoided. They will examine both surface water and ground water laws and work to develop a comprehensive water policy in the hope that the state will adopt their model legislation.

Louisiana water laws, at present, are most concerned with surface water, which is

found in lakes, rivers and the oceans. Surface water is considered a public resource, available to all to use but owned by the state. Louisiana law primarily focuses on navigable waterways with the goal of promoting commerce and defining the rights of water-front property owners. It is also concerned with running waters and with preserving natural water flows. Other Louisiana water management scenarios tend to be reactive rather than proactive, especially those addressing the use and removal of groundwater. Wilkins said Louisiana has few laws regulating groundwater, but that issues like underground saltwater intrusion into aquifers caused by the extraction of groundwater will be more frequent and problematic, especially as industry demand for water increases.

“The need to purposefully balance navigation, flood control, environmental, agricultural, industrial and drinking water supplies is already pressing and becoming more so,” Wilkins said.

On the web:

Louisiana Sea Grant Law and Policy Program
www.lsu.edu/sglegal

Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy
www.law.tulane.edu/enlaw





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Mobile Home



LaHouse – a demonstration home designed around the concept of sustainable building practices – has been open on the LSU Baton Rouge campus since 2008, allowing visitors to see how to construct a safer, more durable, greener and healthier home for Louisiana’s climate. Although LaHouse receives a steady stream of visitors, not everyone can make it to the Capital City to tour the building. So, the LSU AgCenter has launched LaHouse Mobile – a 136 square-foot demonstration home on wheels. The interior of LaHouse Mobile is unfinished, revealing construction details and construction options that builders and homeowners can apply to new and existing houses to make their structures more energy efficient and storm resilient. Organizations and communities wanting LaHouse Mobile to make a visit later this fall can contact their local AgCenter or Sea Grant Extension agent to make arrangements.