CYANOTECH CORP
Form 10-K
June 23, 2016

UNITED STAT	TES		
SECURITIES	AND EXCHAN	GE COMMISSIO	N

Washington, D. C. 20549

FORM 10-K

ANNUAL REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT **OF 1934**

For the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2016

Commission File Number 0-14602

CYANOTECH CORPORATION

(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

Nevada 91-1206026

(State or other jurisdiction of incorporation or organization) (I. R. S. Employer Identification No.)

73-4460 Queen Kaahumanu Highway, Suite 102, 96740 Kailua-Kona, Hawaii

(Zip (Address of principal executive offices) Code)

Registrant's telephone number, including area code: (808) 326-1353

Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(b) of the Act: None	Name of each exchange on which registered: NASDAQ Capital Market
Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(g) of the Act:	
Common Stock, \$0.02 par value (Title of Class)	
Indicate by check mark if the registrant is a well-known sea Yes No	soned issuer, as defined in Rule 405 of the Securities Act.
Indicate by check mark if the registrant is not required to fil Act. Yes No	e reports pursuant to Section 13 or Section 15(d) of the
Indicate by check mark whether the registrant (1) has filed a Securities Exchange Act of 1934 during the preceding 12 m required to file such reports), and (2) has been subject to such	onths (or for such shorter period that the registrant was
Indicate by checkmark whether the registrant has submitted every Interactive Data File required to be submitted and post this chapter) during the preceding 12 months (or such shorte such files). Yes No	sted pursuant to Rule 405 of Regulation S-T (§229.405 of
Indicate by check mark if disclosure of delinquent filers pur chapter) is not contained herein, and will not be contained, t information statements incorporated by reference in Part III	to the best of registrant's knowledge, in definitive proxy or
Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a large accorn a smaller reporting company. See definitions of "large accompany" in Rule 12b-2 of the Exchange Act. (Check one):	celerated filer," "accelerated filer," and "smaller reporting

Accelerated filer

Large accelerated filer

Non-accelerated filer Smaller reporting company (Do not check if a smaller reporting company)						
Indicated by check mark whether the registrant is a shell company (as defined in Rule 12b-2 of the Act). Yes	No					
The aggregate market value of the Registrant's Common Stock held by non-affiliates of the Registrant on September 30, 2015 was approximately \$33,244,974 based on the closing sale price of the Common Stock on the NASDAQ Capital Market on that date.						
Number of shares outstanding of Registrant's Common Stock at June 23, 2016 was 5,648,264.						
DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE						
Portions of the Registrant's Definitive Proxy Statement for its 2016 Annual Meeting of Stockholders, to be filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on or prior to July 15, 2016 and to be used in connection with the Annual Meeting of Stockholders expected to be held on August 25, 2016, are incorporated by reference in Part III of this Form 10-K.						

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FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

This Report and other presentations made by Cyanotech Corporation ("CYAN") and its subsidiary contain "forward-looking statements," which include statements that are predictive in nature, depend upon or refer to future events or conditions, and usually include words such as "expects," "anticipates," "intends," "plan," "believes," "predicts", "estion similar expressions. In addition, any statement concerning future financial performance, ongoing business strategies or prospects and possible future actions are also forward-looking statements. Forward-looking statements are based upon current expectations and projections about future events and are subject to risks, uncertainties and the accuracy of assumptions concerning CYAN and its subsidiary (collectively, the "Company"), the performance of the industry in which CYAN does business, and economic and market factors, among other things. **These forward-looking statements are not guarantees of future performance. You should not place undue reliance on forward-looking statements.**

Forward-looking statements speak only as of the date of the Report, presentation or filing in which they are made. Except to the extent required by the Federal Securities Laws, we undertake no obligation to publicly update or revise any forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise. Our forward-looking statements in this Report include, but are not limited to:

Statements relating to our business strategy;

Statements relating to our business objectives; and

Expectations concerning future operations, profitability, liquidity and financial resources.

These forward-looking statements are subject to risk, uncertainties and assumptions about us and our operations that are subject to change based on various important factors, some of which are beyond our control. The following factors, among others, could cause our financial performance to differ significantly from the goals, plans, objectives, intentions and expectations expressed in our forward-looking statements:

Environmental restrictions, soil and water conditions, levels of sunlight and seasonal weather patterns, particularly heavy rain, wind and other hazards;

Consumer perception of our products due to adverse scientific research or findings, publicity regarding nutritional supplements, litigation, regulatory investigations or other events, conditions and circumstances involving the Company which receive national media coverage;

Effects of competition, including tactics and locations of competitors and operating and market competition;

Demand for our products, the quantities and qualities thereof available for sale and levels of customer satisfaction, including significant unforeseen fluctuations in global demand for products similar to our products;

Our dependence on the experience, continuity and competence of our executive officers and other key employees;

The added risks associated with or attributed to the current local, national and world economic conditions, including but not limited to, the volatility of crude oil prices, inflation and currency fluctuations;

Changes in domestic and/or foreign laws, regulations or standards, affecting nutraceutical products or our methods of operation;

Access to available and reasonable financing on a timely basis;

The Company's inability to generate enough revenues to meet its obligations or repay maturing indebtedness;

Failure of capital projects to operate as expected or meet expected results;

Changes in laws, corporate governance requirements and tax rates, regulations, accounting standards and the application to us or the nutritional products industry of new decisions by courts, regulators or other government authorities;

Legal costs associated with any legal proceedings, and the potential direct and indirect cost and other effects on our business or financial condition resulting from any legal proceedings.

Risk associated with the geographic concentration of our business;

Acts of war, terrorist incidents or natural disasters; and

Other risks or uncertainties described elsewhere in this Report and in other periodic reports previously and subsequently filed by us with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

PART I

Item 1. Business

Unless otherwise indicated, all references in this report to the "Company", "we", "us", "our", and "Cyanotech" refer to Cyanotech Corporation and its wholly owned subsidiary, Nutrex Hawaii, Inc. ("Nutrex Hawaii" or "Nutrex"), a Hawaii corporation.

General

We are a world leader in the production of high value natural products derived from microalgae. Incorporated in 1983, we are guided by the principle of providing beneficial, quality microalgal products for health and human nutrition in a sustainable, reliable and environmentally sensitive operation. We are GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices) certified by the Natural Products AssociationTM, reinforcing our commitment to quality in our products, quality in our relationships (with our customers, suppliers, employees and the communities we live in), and quality of the environment in which we work. Our products include:

Hawaiian *BioAstin*® natural astaxanthin - a powerful dietary antioxidant shown to support and maintain the body's natural inflammatory response, to enhance skin, and to support eye and joint health. It has expanding applications as a human nutraceutical and functional food ingredient; and

Hawaiian *Spirulina Pacifica*® - a nutrient-rich dietary supplement used for extra energy, a strengthened immune system, cardiovascular benefits and as a source of antioxidant carotenoids

Microalgae are a diverse group of microscopic plants that have a wide range of physiological and biochemical characteristics and contain, among other things, high levels of natural protein, amino acids, vitamins, pigments and enzymes. Microalgae have the following properties that make commercial production attractive: (1) microalgae grow much faster than land grown plants, often up to 100 times faster; (2) microalgae have uniform cell structures with no bark, stems, branches or leaves, permitting easier extraction of products and higher utilization of the microalgae cells; and (3) the cellular uniformity of microalgae makes it practical to control the growing environment in order to optimize a particular cell characteristic. Efficient and effective cultivation of microalgae requires consistent light, warm temperatures, low rainfall and proper chemical balance in a very nutrient-rich environment, free of environmental contaminants and unwanted organisms. This is a challenge that has motivated us to design, develop and implement proprietary production and harvesting technologies, systems and processes in order to commercially produce human nutritional products derived from microalgae.

Our production of these products at the 90-acre facility on the Kona Coast of the island of Hawaii provides several benefits. We selected the Keahole Point location in order to take advantage of relatively consistent warm temperatures, sunshine and low levels of rainfall needed for optimal cultivation of microalgae. This location also offers us access to cold deep ocean water, drawn from an offshore depth of 2,000 feet, which we use in our *Ocean-Chill Drying* system to eliminate the oxidative damage caused by standard drying techniques and as a source of trace nutrients for microalgal cultures. The area is also designated a Biosecure Zone, with tight control of organisms allowed into the area and free of genetically modified organisms (GMO's). We believe that our technology, systems, processes and favorable growing location generally permit year-round harvest of our microalgal products in a cost-effective manner.

Our Business

We operate entirely in one operating segment, the cultivation and production of microalgae into high-value, high-quality natural health and nutrition products. We cultivate, on a large-scale basis, two microalgal species from which our two major product lines, natural astaxanthin products and spirulina products, are derived. We record revenue and cost of sales information by product category, but do not record operating expenses by such product category.

The following table sets forth, for the three years ended March 31, 2016, the net sales contributed by each of our product lines (in thousands):

	Net Sales			
	2016	2015	2014	
Natural astaxanthin products:				
BioAstin®	\$19,829	\$22,087	\$19,056	
Spirulina products:				
Spirulina Pacifica®	12,011	11,722	9,122	
Total	\$31,840	\$33,809	\$28,178	

Natural Astaxanthin Products

We commercial production of natural astaxanthin in 1997 and in 1999 introduced *BioAstin*®, our natural astaxanthin product for the human health and nutrition market. *BioAstin*® represents approximately two-thirds of our net sales. Astaxanthin's antioxidant properties are believed to surpass many of the antioxidant properties of vitamin C, vitamin E, beta-carotene and other carotenoids. Independent scientific studies indicate that in certain models, natural astaxanthin has up to 550 times the antioxidant activity of vitamin E and 10 times the antioxidant activity of beta-carotene. In addition, a growing body of scientific literature suggests that natural astaxanthin has beneficial properties as an anti-inflammatory, with additional benefits for joint, skin and eye health.

BioAstin® is produced in two forms: a liquid lipid extract and gelcaps, both of which are sold in bulk quantities. BioAstin® gelcaps are also sold in packaged consumer form under the Nutrex Hawaii label as well as private label consumer packaged product. Over time, we have shifted our focus and resources on producing and marketing natural astaxanthin for the higher value packaged consumer market.

BioAstin® is GRAS (generally recognized as safe) as determined by the United States Food and Drug Administration. Our all natural *BioAstin*® is cultivated without the use of herbicides or pesticides, and is not genetically modified (non GMO). In fiscal 2012 we applied for a new dietary ingredient (NDI), with the United States Food and Drug Administration, providing for a daily dosage of 12mg of astaxanthin which was reviewed without comment.

We produce natural astaxanthin from *Haematococcus pluvialis* microalgae grown in fresh water supplemented with nutrients. As these algae are extremely susceptible to contamination by unwanted algae, protozoa and amoebae, we developed a proprietary system known as the *PhytoDome Closed Culture System* or *PhytoDome CCS* to overcome this problem. Using these large-scale photobioreactors, we have generally been able to grow consistently large volumes of contaminant-free *Haematococcus* culture, although quarterly production levels are subject to seasonality. Fresh water

is critical to the production of our natural astaxanthin and while we have not experienced any constraint on fresh water availability to date, availability could be impacted by a significant population growth in the region as well as throughput constraints on the water delivery infrastructure. We have met with officials of the County of Hawaii to assess the fresh water situation and evaluate the probability of future risks. We recycle fresh water in our production process where possible and continue to explore further recycling opportunities.

For the final stage of cultivation, the *Haematococcus* algae is transferred to open ponds where an environmental stress is applied causing the algae to form spores which accumulate high levels of astaxanthin. Once ready for harvest, the media containing these spores is transported through underground pipes to our astaxanthin processing building where the culture media and algal spores are separated. Fresh water recovered from this stage of processing may be recycled for further use in cultivation. Unlike spirulina, astaxanthin is produced in a batch-mode and each cultivation pond must be completely drained and thoroughly cleaned between cycles. As sunlight is a major component of cultivation, production can be impacted by inclement weather and seasonal changes during the winter months, with shorter daylight hours and increased cloud cover.

The harvested algal spores are dried to flakes or a fine powder. During processing, the spores are cracked in a proprietary system to assure high bioavailability of astaxanthin. Each production lot of astaxanthin is sampled and tested for astaxanthin concentration. Finally, the bulk powder is vacuum-packed. Natural astaxanthin for human consumption is processed further utilizing a high-pressure extraction process. The resulting product is a lipid extract insoluble in water used in the production of gelcaps.

All natural astaxanthin products undergo a prescribed set of microbiological food product tests to ensure safety and quality. We have historically used third party contract manufacturers for the extraction services and the production of gelcaps. However, beginning June 2015 we have the capability to perform the extraction process at our new extraction and warehouse facility in Kona, Hawaii. All third party contract manufacturers are audit inspected by our Quality Control Department and are required to comply with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) regulations. The majority of these contract manufacturers hold independent third party GMP certifications.

BioAstin® is sold in liquid lipid form as a raw ingredient to dietary supplement manufacturers, health food formulators and cosmetic manufacturers, and BioAstin® gelcaps are sold in bulk quantities to distributors. BioAstin® gelcaps are also sold as a packaged consumer product through Nutrex Hawaii directly to natural product distributors, retailers and consumers. In 2007, we also introduced a line of BioAstin® based nutritional supplements, MDFormulas. MDFormulas combined the health benefits of BioAstin® with other proven nutrients with benefits for targeted applications such as skin, heart and joint health.

BioAstin® competes directly with similar products marketed by other manufacturers including Fuji Chemical of Japan, Algatechnologies of Israel, BGG of China and Valensa (dba U.S. Nutraceuticals, LLC) in the United States. In the general category of nutritional supplements, *BioAstin*® and *MDFormulas* also compete with a variety of vitamins, dietary supplements and other antioxidant products available to consumers. The nutritional products market is highly competitive and includes international, national, regional and local producers and distributors, many of whom have greater resources than we have, and many of whom offer a greater variety of products.

The potential benefits of astaxanthin to human health are continuing to emerge. As one of the most potent and bioactive biological antioxidants found in nature, the number of potential roles of natural astaxanthin for human health is growing. Much research has been published in recent years on the beneficial roles of antioxidants in our health, in the aging process and on specific health conditions. The full efficacy of BioAstin® as a human nutraceutical supplement requires further significant clinical study. We have spent limited amounts on clinical trials over the past few fiscal years. Independent antioxidant research and prior clinical trials show promising human applications. We hold three United States patents relating to the usage of BioAstin® in the treatment of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, the treatment of canker/cold sores and for its use as a topical and oral sunscreen.

Spirulina Products

We have been producing a strain of spirulina microalgae marketed as Hawaiian *Spirulina Pacifica*® since 1984. *Spirulina Pacifica*® represents approximately one-third of our net sales. *Spirulina Pacifica*® provides a vegetable-based, highly absorbable source of protein, natural beta-carotene, mixed carotenoids, B vitamins, gamma linolenic acid, essential amino acids and other phytonutrients.

Spirulina Pacifica® is produced in two forms: powder and tablets. Powder is used as an ingredient in nutritional supplements and health beverages; tablets are consumed as a daily dietary supplement. Both forms are sold as raw material ingredients in bulk quantities, as packaged consumer products under the Nutrex Hawaii label and as private label consumer packaged products. We recently launched two new spirulina products. Spearmint spirulina tablets provide a fresh, new flavor option for both current consumers and those trying spirulina for the first time, and Greens Complete Superfood Powder formula is our entry into the green superfood category, each serving is packed with three grams of spirulina plus organic greens, organic antioxidants and probiotics.

Spirulina Pacifica® is GRAS (generally recognized as safe) for addition to a variety of foods as determined by the United States Food and Drug Administration. Our all natural Spirulina Pacifica® is cultivated without the use of herbicides or pesticides, is not genetically modified (non GMO) and is certified Kosher by Organized Kashrus Laboratories of Brooklyn, New York and certified Halal by the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America.

Our *Spirulina Pacifica*® is cultivated in a combination of fresh water and a metered amount of nutrient-rich deep ocean water (containing essential trace elements), drawn from a depth of 2,000 feet below sea level. This water mixture is supplemented with other major required nutrients. With the exception of deep ocean water, the raw materials and nutrients required in our spirulina production are available from multiple sources. In the case of deep ocean water, although abundantly available at this location, the facility to pump and deliver the water to our location is owned by the State of Hawaii. The facility is constructed of two separately located pump stations providing redundancy should one station fail. The State of Hawaii sets the price for deep ocean water annually based on its cost to deliver the water.

The spirulina crop in each pond is circulated by paddlewheels to keep an even blend of nutrients in suspension and a uniform exposure of the algae to sunlight. Our ponds are engineered to maintain the right media depth for sunlight to permeate each crop completely, facilitating rapid growth. The design of our cultivation ponds promotes efficient growing conditions, allowing the *Spirulina Pacifica*® algae to reproduce rapidly. Each pond can be harvested, on average, in six days. As sunlight is a major component of cultivation, production can be impacted by inclement weather and seasonal changes during the winter months, with shortened daylight hours.

Once ready for harvest, a majority of the spirulina algae are pumped from a pond to our processing building where the crop is separated from the culture media. The culture remaining in the ponds serves as an inoculum for the next growth cycle. Harvested spirulina is washed with fresh water and filtered before moving to the drying stage. Culture media separated from spirulina algae during processing are conserved and recycled. Our *Integrated Culture Biology Management* ("ICBM") technology for microalgae cultivation has proven to be a reliable and stable operating environment, allowing us to grow and harvest spirulina without significant contamination by unwanted microorganisms and without associated loss of productivity.

Spirulina Pacifica® powder is dried via our low-oxygen Ocean-Chill Drying process, thereby preserving high levels of antioxidant carotenoids and other nutrients sensitive to heat and oxygen. The rapid drying process results in a dark green powder. Spirulina powder is difficult to form into tablets. Most tablet manufacturers either add high amounts (from 10% to 30%) of inert substances to "glue" the tablet together or use a heat granulation process that destroys nutrients. In contrast, our Spirulina Pacifica® tablets contain a maximum of 2% of such substances and are produced in cold press compression tablet-making machines.

Each production lot of *Spirulina Pacifica*® is sampled and subjected to thorough quality control analyses including testing for moisture, carotenoids, minerals, color and taste, among others. Further, each lot of our *Spirulina Pacifica*® undergoes a prescribed set of microbiological food product tests, including total aerobic bacteria, coliform bacteria and E. coli. The *Spirulina Pacifica*® powder and tablets are packaged to extend shelf life and ensure product freshness. Our packaged consumer products are bottled and labeled by third party contractors in California. These contractors are subject to regular government inspections and hold Drug Manufacturing Licenses & Processed Food Registrations with the State of California Department of Health. Such packaging services are readily available from multiple sources.

The majority of our bulk spirulina is sold to international health food manufacturers and formulators, many of whom identify and promote our Hawaiian *Spirulina Pacifica*® in their products. Such customers purchase bulk powder or bulk tablets and package these products under their brand label for sale to the health and natural food markets in their countries. Some of the brands produced by these customers are marketed and sold in direct competition with the packaged consumer products sold through our Nutrex Hawaii subsidiary in international channels. In the domestic market, Nutrex Hawaii packaged consumer products are sold through an established health food distribution network or directly to consumers. In selected international markets, we have exclusive sales distributors for both our bulk and packaged consumer products.

Our *Spirulina Pacifica*® products compete with a variety of vitamins, dietary supplements, other algal products and similar nutritional products available to consumers. The nutritional products category is highly competitive and includes international, national, regional and local producers and distributors, many of whom have greater resources than Cyanotech and many of whom offer a greater variety of products. Our direct competition in the spirulina market is currently from Dainippon Ink and Chemical Company's Earthrise facility in California, Parry Nutraceuticals, a division of Murugappa Group of India and several farms in China. In addition, there are numerous other smaller farms throughout the world. We have experienced increased price competition due to the large number of spirulina suppliers as well as customers who generally treat these products as commodities with price being the major determining factor driving their purchasing decision. As one of the largest producers of spirulina, our challenge is to increase our market share among customers who seek the high-quality products we produce while concurrently adjusting our product mix to meet our revenue and profitability targets.

Major Customers

Two customers accounted for 19% and 11%, respectively, of our total net sales in the fiscal year ended March 31, 2016. One customer accounted for 13% of our total net sales in the fiscal year ended March 31, 2015. There were no customers with sales at or above 10% of our total net sales for the year ended March 31, 2014.

Research and Development

Our expertise for many years has been in the development of efficient, stable and cost-effective production systems for microalgal products. We have learned production levels from our systems may not be sustainable across periods of days, weeks, or even months. Accordingly, we typically investigate each specific microalgae identified in the scientific literature for potentially marketable products and for solutions to production stability and efficiency challenges, and then strive to develop the technology to grow such microalgae on a commercial scale or to incorporate procedures or technology to improve production stability and efficiency. Successful microalgal product developments and technical solutions are highly uncertain and dependent on numerous factors, many beyond our control. Products and solutions or improvements that appear promising in early phases of development may be found to be ineffective, may be uneconomical because of manufacturing costs or other factors, may be precluded from commercialization due to the proprietary rights of other companies, or may fail to receive necessary regulatory approvals. We had research and development expenditures of \$633,000, \$517,000 and \$469,000 in fiscal years 2016, 2015 and 2014, respectively. We invested \$80,000, \$6,000 and \$69,000 in scientific clinical trials during fiscal 2016, 2015 and 2014, respectively.

Patents, Trademarks and Licenses

We have been granted four United States patents: one on aspects of our production methods and three relating to usage of our *BioAstin*® products.

Our production method patent is directed to microalgae production technology, and expired in April 2016. Our patents relating to usage of our *BioAstin*® products are three utility patents on the use of astaxanthin, which will expire in December 2019, February 2020 and April 2020.

Although we view our proprietary rights as important, we currently believe that a loss of patent rights is not likely to have a material adverse effect on our present business as a whole. Instead, our commercial results mainly depend upon our trade secrets, know-how, other non-patent proprietary rights, customer relationships, our climate and our location. As a result, we feel that our competitors in the U.S. would not be able to implement competing technology covered by our patents now, after their expirations or otherwise, without our same combination of non-patented attributes.

We have registered trademarks in the U.S. and in some foreign markets, such as the European Union. Our operations are not dependent upon any single trademark, although some trademarks are identified with a number of our products and are important in the sale and marketing of such products.

Regulations

Several governmental agencies regulate various aspects of our business and our products in the United States, including the Food and Drug Administration, the Federal Trade Commission, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the State of Hawaii Department of Health, the Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, the United States Postal Service, state attorney general offices and various agencies of the states and localities in which our products are sold. We believe we are in compliance the all material government regulations which apply to our products and operations. However, we are not able to predict the nature of any future laws, regulations, interpretations or applications, nor can we predict what effect future changes would have on our business.

Our international customers are subject to similar governmental agency regulations in their various geographic regions. Compliance by our customers with such local regulations is beyond our control and we cannot predict their ability to maintain such compliance. However, we strive to assist our customers in meeting local regulations pertaining to the use and sale of our products whenever possible.

Environmental Matters