



Intelligent Use of the Seas

How NOAA's Aquaculture Investments Address our Nation's Growing Demand for Healthy, Safe Seafood

For over 125 years, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and its predecessor agencies have been leaders in the development of environmentally sustainable technologies to support marine aquaculture and the enhancement of living marine resources. As a result of this long-term investment by NOAA, marine aquaculture operations in the United States produce a consistent supply of safe seafood which complements the nation's wild fisheries harvest. Seafood from aquaculture also helps offset the nation's nearly \$8 billion seafood trade deficit, supports thousands of jobs in U.S. coastal communities, and provides an additional level of food safety and security for this nation.

Right now, aquaculture is gaining momentum faster than any other form of food production worldwide, based on an unprecedented level of demand for seafood. For example, at current per capita consumption of one seafood meal a week – and with a modest increase in population – the United States will need another two million tons per year of seafood by 2025 to meet demand. The most obvious question is ... where will more seafood come from? Even with production from wild capture fisheries at fully sustainable levels, increased aquaculture production from domestic or foreign sources will be required to increase the seafood supply. In the United States, imports already make up over 70% of the seafood we consume, and at least 40% of that imported seafood is farmed.

With the growing demand for seafood on the horizon, the Federal government, leading research institutions, the aquaculture industry and coastal communities are exploring options for increasing aquaculture production right here at home. As the nation's oceans agency, NOAA is at the forefront of this exploratory effort. At the same time, NOAA's rich tradition of aquaculture research continues in the areas of marine stock enhancement, management techniques and practices to protect the environment, social and economic impacts, aquafeed formulation, and the protection of aquatic animal health.

Although aquaculture is a significant global industry for food production, the complex nature of the issues facing the emerging U.S. marine aquaculture industry continues to impede the development of domestic aquaculture. Continued research and technology development is necessary to address production technology, health and nutrition, and environmental and policy issues if the U.S. is going to attain the production goals stated in the 1999 Department of Commerce Aquaculture Policy and to respond to the policy recommendations made by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy in 2004.

