



## Realizing the Potential of Aquaculture in B.C.

Aquaculture is the fastest growing agri-food industry in the world. The United Nations Fisheries and Agriculture Organization have estimated that global aquaculture production will outpace commercial fisheries by 2030. In Canada production has flatlined over the past ten years due to an outdated regulatory regime, lack of adequate programming, and issues of public confidence around environmental performance and food safety.

As outlined in a report by the B.C. government, the aquaculture industry accounted for over 65% of the total landed value of BC seafood in 2016 (\$776.8 million), and farm-raised salmon is the top seafood commodity.

Salmon farming has grown to take its place as the province's largest agricultural export, generating \$1,561.9 million in economic output according to MNP's 2017 Economic Impact study. It provides stable, year-round employment for 6,600 men and women, in direct and supply and service jobs, largely in coastal communities where other opportunities are limited. The industry makes an overall contribution to BC's GDP of \$557.8 million, comprised of \$248.0 million in direct, \$218.8 million in indirect and \$91.0 million in induced impacts. Aquaculture in B.C. generates about 6,610 Full Time Equivalents (FTE) of employment, comprised of 2,966 FTE in direct activities, 2,716 FTE in indirect jobs and 928 FTE in induced activities.

These jobs created \$223.3 million in total labour income in 2007. Total direct labour income was \$78.4 million, resulting in average income of \$35,250 per FTE employed in direct aquaculture activities. Indirect income earned by those employed in support industries was \$95.1 million, with average incomes of about \$40,900. Those employed in induced activities in the broader economy earned \$50.4 million, for an average income of \$35,700. Many of these jobs and the resulting income go to B.C.'s Indigenous communities.

Until 2010, aquaculture in B.C. had been a shared jurisdiction between the provincial and federal governments and involved a number of government agencies. For example, DFO is the lead federal agency for aquaculture but there are a number of other federal departments and agencies involved in

the regulatory process, including Health Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Transport Canada, the Department of Foreign Affairs Trade and Development, Environment Canada, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. This mix of government agencies has created, and continues to create, issues for the managed growth of the aquaculture sector. For example, applications for operational changes within approved tenure boundaries may find companies waiting years for regulatory approval. This results in the loss of use of farms and therefore an inability to plan hiring and training for new employees, inability to purchase new equipment and most importantly, the loss of future investment due to lack of investors' confidence.

As a result of the 2009 Hinkson Court decision, the regulatory authority for the aquaculture industry has shifted from the Provincial to the Federal Government. The transfer of authority has revealed that there is a gap in legislation when it comes to aquaculture. A federal Aquaculture Act would establish national environmental standards, clarify industry responsibilities, and codify a proud legacy of environmental stewardship.

Appropriate legislation would recognize in law the long-standing reality of aquaculture as a legitimate caretaker of Canada's aquatic resources. It would support efforts to ensure a modern industry and build on an already impressive record of safety and sustainability. The introduction of this legislation could help facilitate the currently ad hoc regulatory changes coming forward from DFO and would enable Canada to realize its full potential, creating new jobs and expanding opportunity in an industry that can be socially, economically and environmentally sustainable.

The aquaculture industry has been the subject of strongly divergent research and opinions, not all of which is based on legitimate and responsible research. Incorrect and misleading information should not stop the further development and expansion of aquaculture farming in B.C.

#### **THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS:**

That the provincial government works with the federal government to:

1. Provide fair access to long term tenures for the aquaculture industry;
2. Ensure that Provincial consultation with First Nations is appropriate and meets the needs of the industry for timely decisions;
3. Support efforts to build public confidence in aquaculture management and place a focus on science and solution; and
4. That the federal government, develop a federal aquaculture act, to establish national environmental standards and clarify industry responsibilities.

*Submitted by the Campbell River Chamber of Commerce*

