

Canadian Action Plan for Aquaculture

Introduction

The Canadian Aquaculture industry is a vital and dynamic partner in the sustainable development¹ of our freshwater and ocean resources. The industry provides meaningful employment in the rural areas of Canada and positive investment opportunities for Canadian business. Ministers recognize that in today's global community, the ability to respond to human needs for food and other commodities is both a responsibility and an opportunity. As an intensive and closely managed activity, aquaculture presents a means to effectively respond to these needs, and benefit Canadian communities.

Recognizing that aquaculture is a shared responsibility, the Canadian Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture wishes to re-affirm their strong commitment to work in collaboration and ensure that their commitments apply similarly to saltwater and freshwater finfish, shellfish and plant aquaculture.

Vision

In recognition of Canada's aquatic resource endowment, technological advantages, capacity for innovation, highly knowledgeable labour force and mutual sense of values for our communities and their environment, Ministers share a common vision for Canada as a world leader in sustainable aquaculture. Through partnerships and innovation, aquaculture will develop in a manner that contributes to our communities and our economy while upholding the ecological values upon which it depends.

It is recognized that governments, private sector organizations, public interest groups, and individual citizens all have a role to play in achieving this vision.

Objectives:

The Ministers commit to:

Improving Government

Ministers recognize that a sound and integrated policy and regulatory environment contributes to a stable and supportive business climate that will enable the industry to continue contributing to Canada's social and economic development.

¹ Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Accordingly, Ministers agree to:

- Develop a co-ordinating mechanism that will help focus government's R&D resources on priorities established co-operatively by government, industry and other stakeholders, and that will contribute to increased overall economic and environmental performance.
- Implement initiatives to identify and address barriers to the development of new aquaculture sites of sufficient scale and develop actions to increase expansion of biologically suitable sites to enable the industry to better compete on a global scale.
- Work with the industry to improve communication between industry and federal, provincial and territorial governments.
- Harmonize existing application and review processes, including duration of aquaculture leases, licenses and permits, in order to streamline the approvals processes applicable to all levels of government in each region / province / territory by 2004.
- Resolve current legal and regulatory impediments and put in place a harmonized legal framework that enables development of the aquaculture sector in Canada.
- Establish service standards for approvals required from government in each region / province / territory as rapidly as possible and by no later than 2004.

Strengthening Competitiveness

Capital for aquaculture investment is mobile and given the global nature of aquaculture it is imperative that the Canadian aquaculture industry be competitive on a regional and international basis. Increasing the consumption of Canadian seafood products nationally and in major markets is critical for the growth of aquaculture in Canada. However, aquaculture, like all primary food producing sectors, requires support in times of poor market conditions and crop failures due to the environment or disease. Furthermore, access to best performing stocks is critical to reduce the cost of production in any livestock industry. The importance of maintaining healthy livestock is also vital to the protection of the public, the industry, the environment and enabling access to international markets.

Canada is a world leader in the development of aquaculture techniques, technology and innovation. The continued growth of aquaculture in Canada requires that such innovation must be commercialized in Canada first to ensure Canadians have the best opportunity to benefit from sustainable development.

To assist industry in the attainment of this goal, Ministers agree to:

- Initiate a review of significant policies, regulations, legislation, programmes and taxation provisions over time with a view to encourage investment in the Canadian aquaculture industry in accordance with existing or new trade agreements.
- Undertake a complete review of existing Canadian safety net programmes now available to other food producing sectors in Canada with a view to providing access or developing new programmes for the aquaculture sector.
- Participate in the development of a National Aquatic Animal Health Programme in co-operation with industry and other stakeholders.
- Review existing impediments to access to the best aquaculture broodstocks and to develop mechanisms for gaining access to and continuous improvement of the best available stocks.
- Work with industry in the development of generic promotion of Canada's aquaculture product in home markets and key international markets for Canadian aquacultural produce.
- Work with industry and research institutions to enable the commercialization of new technology, species and innovation on a Canada First basis.
- Seek opportunities to enable Aboriginal and other stakeholder participation in aquaculture development.

Increasing Public Confidence

Ministers recognize the importance of increasing public confidence that the aquaculture industry is being appropriately regulated and is operating in a manner which adequately safeguards public safety and the environment.

To that end Ministers agree to:

- Support initiatives in their respective jurisdictions to communicate with Canadians in an open, transparent, and responsive manner regarding issues and concerns related to aquaculture and to ensure they have access to accurate and timely information relevant to identified concerns.
- Support initiatives in their respective jurisdictions that will facilitate dialogue between the aquaculture industry and other interests such as commercial fishermen, recreational anglers, tourist outfitters, cottagers, environmental organizations, and Aboriginal groups to seek acceptable resolution to

identified concerns between the sectors.

- Support initiatives in their respective jurisdictions that will foster better collaboration between the aquaculture and the fisheries industries in order to encourage partnerships and focus on developing an integrated fish and seafood sector in Canada.
- Support implementation of an overarching National Code of Conduct of the aquaculture industry covering all jurisdictions and all sectors of the industry by April 2003. The Ministers also noted that various levels of progress have been made toward establishing provincial and sectoral Codes of Practice and support their completion by 2004.
- Support development and implementation of processes for the approval of new aquaculture developments that include harmonized monitoring and reporting, ensure an integrated management approach and provide opportunities for consultation with all interested parties. The Ministers recognize the importance of an integrated resource management approach, including best use of aquatic resources, a precautionary approach to managing risks of serious or irreversible harm where there is significant scientific uncertainty, and an open and transparent process when considering siting for new aquaculture developments.
- Work cooperatively to develop and support initiatives that promote recognition of Canada's aquaculture industry as leaders in sustainable aquaculture development and producers of aquaculture products that are the safest and highest quality in the world.