



July 11, 2024

To: Federal and Provincial Ministers of Agriculture and Fisheries
Via Email

Dear Ministers:

The world is moving ahead with developing aquaculture as a growing means to produce seafood, with aquaculture now providing the majority of seafood production. But Canada is fast falling behind and failing to seize the opportunity.

Aquaculture is a major food and economic opportunity for Canada. We support secure, healthy and sustainable food production; well-paying jobs in rural/remote areas; Indigenous economic opportunity; value-added opportunity for Canada's grain and oilseed farmers; and economic growth.

Despite the potential, the sector has flatlined in production in Canada since 2002 and is now in steep decline because of government-mandated reductions in BC salmon farming since 2020. Since its commercial beginning in Canada only ~45 years ago, aquaculture practices have changed dramatically. Improvements have been made and peer-reviewed science supports modern practices, new technology, and strong regulations.

It is time to move on to a new era of aquaculture production in Canada. Based in science, we challenge you, as government regulators and leaders, to develop a vision for a growing and vital aquaculture sector for Canada. You have an opportunity now to forge a path for your province and Canada to be the best and most innovative producers of farm-raised seafood in the world.

We recommend the following steps to you to support Canada's potential for farm-raised seafood.

1) Farmers need Restored Confidence in Science Evaluation and Advice Processes

Government decisions must be made based on objective peer-reviewed science evaluation processes that provide advice to policymakers. In the situation of BC salmon farming, this has been completely broken, with political decisions being made in conflict with long-established CSAS processes. It is a fundamental responsibility of federal and provincial governments to restore confidence in their science evaluation and advice processes. Confidence in science evaluation processes is critical to food safety, market-access, environmental stewardship, and supporting innovation.

2) Aquaculture is Agriculture: Support Separation of Federal Science/Regulatory Functions from Sector Development and Provide Proper Farming Program Supports to Sector

As part of the farming and food producing community, aquaculture needs to be right-placed and supported by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

It is finally time to realize that the federal DFO management function for aquaculture is broken and to chart a new path. DFO has shown it cannot both regulate and develop the sector. The current

Email: info@aquaculture.ca **Website:** www.aquaculture.ca

610-170 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, ON K1P 5V5



structure is contributing directly to the sector's stagnation. It should – like the CFIA, become a regulator and focus its activities. This recommendation was made in the 2004 report from the federal Aquaculture Commissioner but never implemented.

3) Develop Federal-Provincial Aquaculture Development Strategy

This sector can create thousands of jobs across Canada in rural and remote coastal areas. The proper investment signals and supports are needed, especially with the last five years of uncertainty due to the negativity and confusion of the BC salmon farming situation.

We urge you to unite together and develop a high-level national strategy and public statement supporting aquaculture development. This could focus on the following:

- Propose a national production target for sector growth
- Identify a small number of overall actions to achieve real progress and build back confidence in Canada
- Support provincial growth strategies and identify major blockages to growth
- Identify actions that will attract investment in innovation and new technologies

4) Support Long-Term Partnership Program for Seafood Education and Communication

We appreciate the partnership of the federal and provincial governments under the Canadian Fish and Seafood Opportunities Fund (CFSOF), a program whose funding sunset on March 31, 2024. The joint CAIA-Fisheries Council "Choose Canadian Seafood" program was a great 2-year success.

However, a major problem in our sector is the absence of longer-term, stable education and marketing partnership funding programs. This is needed to educate Canadians and bring together the entire seafood sector as an important part of the Canadian agri-food sector. We ask you to make this a priority in your discussions.

5) Focus on Stakeholders who Bring Practical and Workable Constructive Solutions to the Table

During this time of social polarization, extreme voices are getting more attention. But rewarding extreme voices and positions is a very dangerous game. The BC salmon farming situation is a case in point: activist groups seeking a 100% reduction in risk where the science clearly does not require such an approach have now secured their extreme policy with a "ban on open net pens by 2029". And this was after 40 per cent of farms had been already shut down in two areas of BC between 2020-2023. BC salmon farmers and First Nations hosts spent thousands of hours developing carefully considered Transition proposals to support the federal government's overall objectives, only to have these rejected in favour of extremism.

Siding with such an extreme approach does not respect science, nurture precious job creation in coastal communities, achieve First Nations reconciliation – where production is covered under an unprecedented 100 per cent agreement with Nations in whose territories the farms operate – and secure healthy and low-carbon domestic food production. Reject extreme positions and choose practical and balanced pathways based in science.



6) Be Bold and Speak Positively About Aquaculture Potential

As investor confidence in Canadian aquaculture has been damaged by recent actions in BC, a simple solution is for you as leaders to speak up regularly about the great potential for aquaculture production in your province and in Canada. We ask you to be ambassadors for the people of the sector: not as it was thirty years ago, but as it is today and will be in the future. Speaking to the positive potential regularly is a simple gesture but necessary. We thank those of you who already do this.

The aquaculture community recognizes it must do a better job at educating the public about current realities and promoting the future of farm-raised seafood development in Canada. In the last few years the sector has enhanced our outreach activities to Canadians, but we must and will continue to do more.

We thank you for your work and leadership on behalf of all Canadians, but specifically the ~20,000 Canadians whose economic livelihoods and their families and communities are dependent on the success of the aquaculture sector in this country.

Sincerely,

Timothy J. Kennedy
President & CEO