

# Aquaculture in Canada 2019

## *Executive Summary*

**Prepared for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans**

**Supplier: EKOS RESEARCH ASSOCIATES INC.**

**Contract Number:** FP996-180011/001/CY

**Contract Value:** \$99,934.26

**Award Date:** November 29, 2018

**Delivery Date:** March 31, 2019

**Registration Number:** POR 082-18

For more information on this report, please email [AquacultureConsultations.XMAR@dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:AquacultureConsultations.XMAR@dfo-mpo.gc.ca)

*Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français*

## EKOS RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

**Contact:** Will Daley

**Ottawa Office**

359 Kent Street, Suite 300

Ottawa, Ontario

K2P 0R6

Tel: (613) 235 7215

Fax: (613) 235 8498

E-mail: [pobox@ekos.com](mailto:pobox@ekos.com)

[www.ekos.com](http://www.ekos.com)

# SUMMARY

To fulfill the research objectives, EKOS Research Associates conducted n=2,015 surveys among three distinct samples drawn from the Canadian public, as outlined in the table below according to the method of sample selection, sample size and margins of error associated with each sample.<sup>1</sup>

<b>Audience</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>
General Public	Online panel	n=1,665
Coastal Communities	Online panel/RDD	n=961
Indigenous Peoples	RDD	n=412

The key findings following from the research are summarized below.

## ***Awareness of and Support for Aquaculture***

Just over half of the general public (52%) say they've heard, seen or read something about aquaculture in the past year.

- Those living in coastal communities (60%) were far more likely to recall seeing, hearing, or reading something about aquaculture in the past year, while indigenous respondents were less likely to say they heard, read or saw something (48%).

When asked if what they recall hearing, reading or seeing about aquaculture recall was positive or negative, two in three general public respondents (66%) say what they recall was negative.

- Coastal Canadians are just as likely as the general public to say what they heard was negative (63%), while Indigenous Peoples are less likely to say what they heard was negative (53%).

Despite the fact that most respondents exposed to information about aquaculture recall negative information, support for aquaculture outpaces opposition to it by a significant margin among all three audiences.

- The general public (45%) and coastal Canadians (46%) are most likely to express support, followed by Indigenous Peoples (39%).

---

<sup>1</sup> Note that a full report on the methodology used in this research is provided within Appendix A below.

When those who support aquaculture were asked, unprompted, why they do so, members of all three audiences most often say it is because aquaculture offers affordable access to seafood for consumers who might otherwise lack access to it. Those opposing aquaculture most often point to two main reasons: because of perceived irresponsible practices by the industry or because of perceived negative effects that aquaculture has on wild fish populations.

### ***Importance of Government Communications***

Nine in ten Canadians (89%) say it is important for the federal government to inform Canadian consumers about the fish farming and how it is regulated.

When asked what type of information about aquaculture would be most helpful to have to make informed choices when purchasing aquaculture products, the general public say information about the location of the aquaculture site where the product was grown would be most helpful (28%). While one in ten (11%) felt it important to know if the product was produced using sustainable practices and the same number (11%) want information specific to the conditions and practices at fish farm operations where the product was grown.

When asked if they feel they have enough information to make informed choices regarding their consumption of fish, most Canadians say either that they do not have enough information (42%) or don't know whether or not they have enough information (14%). Fewer than half of the general public (44%) say they do have enough information.

- Coastal respondents (54%) and indigenous respondents (58%) are more likely than the general public to say they have enough information to make informed choices.

Most Canadians (42%) trust a scientist employed by a university to provide accurate, reliable and unbiased information about aquaculture. In comparison, 10% of Canadians trust a scientist with the Government of Canada to provide that information. Fourteen per cent of Canadians felt that a partnership between the Government of Canada and the aquaculture industry would provide accurate, reliable, unbiased information compared to 3% of Canadians who responded that a representative from the industry could provide this information.

### ***Expectations of Government***

When asked which of several considerations are most important for the government to manage aquaculture in a responsible way, the general public most often say protecting biodiversity and the sustainability of wild fish populations is the most important, followed closely by protecting the environment as the second most important consideration (42%).

When asked what would best demonstrate that the government is managing aquaculture or fish farming in a responsible way, general public respondents were split between publicly sharing health data on farmed fish (51%) and government investment in minimizing the environmental impacts of aquaculture/fish farming (50%).

### ***Impact of Aquaculture***

Over two thirds of Canadians (67%) feel the largest impact of aquaculture is on the economy in communities where the practice occurs. Just under two thirds of Canadians (61%) think there is a large impact on the health of wild fish populations and a similar number (59%) see an impact on the availability of affordable product for consumers.

### ***Consumer Preferences***

When asked unprompted what information they look for when buying fish, 16% of the general public say they look for whether fish or shellfish they might buy is wild-caught or farmed. This consideration comes in third place behind freshness (31%) and the origin of the product (22%).

Although just 16% of Canadians say they look for information on whether fish is wild caught or farmed when asked the question without prompting, when asked directly if this is a consideration, nearly two thirds of general public and coastal Canadians (62% each) say it is.

When asked whether they prefer wild-caught or farmed fish, most Canadians say they prefer wild-caught fish (54%), while 37% say they have no preference between the two. Just 5% say they prefer farmed fish to wild-caught fish.

- Both coastal (65%) and indigenous respondents (67%) are more likely than the general public to say they prefer wild-caught fish over farmed fish.

General public respondents who say they prefer wild-caught fish most often say it is because it is more environmentally friendly (27%), healthier (26%), because it has a better flavour (22%) or because it is seen as being higher quality (19%).

### ***Terminology: Aquaculture vs. Fish Farming***

When asked which of two terms is more familiar to them, two in three Canadians (68%) say that “fish farming” is more familiar to them than “aquaculture,” which just fewer than one in four (23%) said was the more familiar term. When asked to choose which term they prefer, the general public are divided between the two options with “fish farming” (42%) slightly edging out “aquaculture” (38%) as the preferred term.

The contract value for the POR project is \$99,934.26 (including HST).

Supplier Name: EKOS Research Associates

PWGSC Contract Number: FP996-180011/001/CY

Contract Award Date: November 29, 2018

To obtain more information on this study, please e-mail [AquacultureConsultations.XMAR@dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:AquacultureConsultations.XMAR@dfo-mpo.gc.ca)