



Fisheries and Oceans Canada

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DFO's Aquaculture Action Plan

To achieve its vision for aquaculture development DFO has developed a comprehensive Aquaculture Action Plan aimed at increasing public confidence in the sustainability of aquaculture and to support competitiveness in international markets.

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The Program for Sustainable Aquaculture

In August 2000, DFO launched its Program for Sustainable Aquaculture. The program reflects the federal government's commitment to increase scientific knowledge to support decision-making, strengthen measures to protect human health, and make the federal legislative and regulatory framework more responsive to public and industry needs. Specifically, the program allocates (\$75 million over five years with \$15 million each year thereafter) in the following key areas:

- \$12.5 million in environmental and biological science to improve the federal government's capacity to assess and mitigate aquaculture's potential impacts on aquatic ecosystems;
- \$20 million for the [Aquaculture Collaborative Research and Development Program](#), under which DFO will partner with industry by jointly funding R&D projects to enhance sector innovation and productivity;
- \$20 million to strengthen the Canadian Shellfish Sanitation Program to maintain consumer and market confidence in the safety and quality of aquaculture products; and
- \$22.5 million to enhance the application of DFO's legislation, regulations and policies that govern aquaculture, particularly as they relate to habitat management and navigation.

An Enabling Policy Environment

DFO has established a set of principles to guide its decision-making and ensure that the department's actions support the social, economic, and environmental aspects of sustainable aquaculture development.

The [Aquaculture Policy Framework](#) (APF) is intended to orient DFO around a common vision for marine and

freshwater aquaculture and shape the development of future departmental aquaculture policies and programs.

The APF consists of the following nine principles aimed at improving DFO's ability to support industry competitiveness and increase public confidence in the sustainability of aquaculture:

DFO Aquaculture Policy Framework - Policy Principles

Increased Public Confidence in the Sustainability of Aquaculture Development

- Principle 1.** DFO will support aquaculture development in a manner consistent with its commitments to ecosystem-based and integrated management, as set out in departmental legislation, regulations and policies.
- Principle 2.** DFO will address issues of public concern in a fair and transparent manner, based on science and risk management approaches endorsed by the Government of Canada.
- Principle 3.** DFO will communicate with and be informed by the views of Canadians on issues pertaining to aquaculture development.
- Principle 4.** DFO will respect constitutionally protected Aboriginal and treaty rights and will work with interested Aboriginal communities to facilitate their participation in aquaculture development.

Increased Industry Competitiveness in Global Markets

- Principle 5.** Recognizing that aquaculture is a legitimate use of land, water and aquatic resources, DFO will work with provincial and territorial governments to provide aquaculturists with predictable, equitable and timely access to the aquatic resource base.
- Principle 6.** DFO will strive to ensure that its own legislative and regulatory frameworks enable the aquaculture sector to develop on an even footing with other sectors.
- Principle 7.** In partnership with other federal departments, provinces and territories, the academic sector and industry, DFO will support the responsible development of the aquaculture sector.
- Principle 8.** DFO will make every effort to understand the needs of the aquaculture industry and to respond in a manner that is solutions-oriented and supportive of aquaculture development.
- Principle 9.** DFO will work with other federal departments and with provincial and territorial governments to coordinate policy development, integrate regulatory frameworks and improve service delivery.

- The principles respect DFO's regulatory responsibilities and are consistent with DFO's Sustainable Development Strategy and policy renewal initiatives such as the Oceans Strategy and Fisheries Management Renewal.
- The APF represents a significant step forward for DFO with regard to its role as lead federal agency for aquaculture development. Specifically, the APF:
 - confirms DFO as both a regulator and enabler of aquaculture development;
 - contributes to DFO's reorientation as a department of sustainable development; and
 - encourages, rather than restrains, responsible aquaculture development.

DFO is currently developing an approach to engage DFO staff, industry and other stakeholders in evaluating the implementation of the APF.

An Enabling Regulatory Environment

The aquaculture industry needs regulations that will enable the industry to develop in a sustainable manner.

DFO is taking action to ensure that its significant responsibilities relating to environmental protection and fish health, as well as marine safety are effectively administered in a transparent manner and, where appropriate harmonised with provincial requirements. In this manner, DFO will work toward developing an enabling regulatory framework for the aquaculture sector - one that clearly conveys the rules for the industry and allows the sector to position itself accordingly.

DFO's first step is to clarify its regulatory requirements in relation to aquaculture development. DFO's current focus is to develop clear guidelines for applying its regulatory responsibilities to aquaculture. DFO staff have developed the following Interim DFO Aquaculture Site Application Guidelines:

- Interim Guide to Application Information and Site Marking Requirements for Aquaculture Projects in Canada under the Navigable Waters Protection Act
[HTML](#) | [PDF](#) (353 KB)
- Interim Guide to the Application of Section 35 of the Fisheries Act to Salmonid Cage Aquaculture Developments
[HTML](#) | [PDF](#) (119 KB)
- Interim Guide to Information Requirements for Environmental Assessment of Marine Finfish Aquaculture Projects;
[HTML](#) | [PDF](#) (197 KB)
- Interim Guide to Information Requirements for Environmental Assessment of Marine Shellfish Aquaculture Projects
[HTML](#) | [PDF](#) (183 KB)
- Interim Guide to Consideration of Cumulative Environmental Effects under CEAA Relative to Aquaculture Projects
[HTML](#) | [PDF](#) (38 KB)
- Interim Guide to Consideration of Effects of Environmental Change on Socio-Economic Conditions under CEAA Relative to Aquaculture Projects
[HTML](#) | [PDF](#) (28 KB)
- Interim Guide to Fisheries Management Role in the Evaluation of Aquaculture Site Applications
[HTML](#) | [PDF](#) (61 KB)

These interim guidelines have been distributed to and discussed with regional DFO staff, provinces, and the aquaculture industry. The guidelines will be evaluated and adjusted based on input from all users (i.e., DFO and provincial regulatory staff, and the aquaculture industry), with a view to harmonize DFO and provincial requirements for aquaculture site applications, where appropriate.

Industry Development Programs

Although the industry is ultimately responsible for its commercial success, the federal government can contribute in certain areas. By investing in R&D, facilitating access to existing federal programs, and initiating other industry development programs, DFO will help position the Canadian aquaculture sector as a world leader in the culture of high-quality, environmentally sound aquaculture products.

In response to clear messages from industry and the public, DFO's initial focus has been the development of a National Aquatic Animal Health Program (NAAHP). The NAAHP will meet international fish health standards, enable Canada to protect its fish and seafood export markets, maintain disease-related restrictions on imports, and improve the competitiveness of the aquaculture sector by effective management of aquatic animal diseases.

Interjurisdictional Co-operation

Responsibility for aquaculture is shared between the federal, provincial and territorial governments. Within the federal government alone, several departments and agencies influence aquaculture development. Operating effectively within this jurisdictional framework can present significant challenges to aquaculturists as they

strive to remain competitive and grow high-quality products - ultimately increasing the socio-economic conditions for many Canadians, especially those in lower income, rural areas.

As the lead federal agency for aquaculture, part of DFO's role is to ensure that all levels of government work co-operatively to support sustainable aquaculture development.

- Through the Canadian Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture Ministers, DFO is working with provincial and territorial governments to develop, through the auspices of an Aquaculture Task Group (ATG), appropriate solutions in priority areas, such as access to sites, aquatic animal health and R&D co-ordination. DFO also works bilaterally with provinces and territories, in many cases through Memoranda of Understanding.
- DFO has established an Interdepartmental Committee on Aquaculture in order to work with other federal departments and agencies to bring increased coherence to aquaculture-related legislation, policies and programs. In addition, this committee has a role in matching the developmental needs of the sector, as well as the public interest issues, with available federal resources and expertise.

Communicating with Canadians

Access to sound information on human health, environmental protection and the socio-economic benefits associated with aquaculture production is key to ensuring the public's confidence that aquaculture is developing in a sustainable manner. Building public confidence also requires that the values and priorities of Canadians are understood and respected as government policies and programs are developed.

DFO is committed to providing Canadians with credible information and listening to their views on aquaculture development. DFO will continue to work with other federal agencies and with provincial and territorial governments, industry, communities, and individuals to achieve these goals.

- DFO is developing a range of communications products, such as this website aimed at improving public understanding of aquaculture. Such efforts will contribute to a more informed dialogue, as well as increased public awareness, and understanding of the management of a sustainable aquaculture industry.

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