

February 14, 2022

United States Senate  
Constitution Ave., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator,

We write to request your support for increasing U.S. production of healthful, sustainable, and affordable seafood through marine aquaculture. Sens. Roger Wicker (R-MS), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Marco Rubio (R-FL), and Reps. Ed Case (D-HI) and Steve Palazzo (R-MS) have introduced an updated version of the *“Advancing the Quality and Understanding of American Aquaculture Act”* or the *“AQUAA Act”*. This bipartisan bill establishes a process for permitting marine aquaculture in federal waters and institutes a clear set of National Standards that preserve existing environmental safeguards and minimize impacts to existing ocean-based industries.

While aquaculture supplies over 50% of seafood globally and is the fastest growing food sector in the world, it is still an untapped industry in the United States. The U.S. imports 90% of the seafood we eat and ranks 16th in production of farmed seafood. As a result, our seafood trade deficit is \$14 billion and growing. Expanding American aquaculture production can help close this gap with the added **economic benefits** of job creation, investment in coastal communities, expanded markets for wild-caught seafood and new markets for American-farmed feed ingredients like soybeans, corn, and peas. A doubling of U.S. aquaculture production could create an additional 50,000 direct and indirect jobs, including in coastal communities, on farms and in emerging technology fields.

Further there is a growing demand for seafood among American consumers, and the AQUAA Act will ensure that the U.S. can meet that demand without depending upon overseas suppliers, which often reside in countries with relaxed or non-existent environmental regulations. Through marine aquaculture, the U.S. can increase sources of healthful and fully traceable seafood protein providing **food security** for American consumers, who are increasingly focused on access to local food, traceability, sustainability, and affordability when making purchasing decisions.

Over the past 30 years, management practices and scientific innovation have reduced, eliminated, or minimized many of the environmental risks at responsibly managed farms.<sup>1</sup> The AQUAA Act includes a national plan to identify and establish areas particularly well-suited for aquaculture, known as Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (AOAs). NOAA is already leading the charge in identifying the most suitable areas in the exclusive economic zones for aquaculture development. Using the best available science and collaboration with ocean use stakeholders, identifying AOAs is an opportunity to use the best global science and guidance on sustainable aquaculture management to support the “triple bottom line” of environmental, economic, and social sustainability. In conjunction with the AQUAA Act the efforts of NOAA will help build out a sustainable US aquaculture sector slowly over time, which is a key factor in encouraging **environmental sustainability**.

Providing a comprehensive, predictable regulatory framework is critical to build a stronger, more resilient seafood sector supported by both well managed sustainable aquaculture and wild fisheries.

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<sup>1</sup> Hall, S. J., A. Delaporte, M. J. Phillips, M. Beveridge, and M. O’Keefe. Blue Frontiers: Managing the Environmental Costs of Aquaculture. Penang, Malaysia: The WorldFish Center (2011).

The AQUAA Act would provide that framework, supporting American jobs, increasing food security, and ensuring consumer demand is met with sustainably produced U.S. seafood. We urge you to reach out to Sens. Wicker, Schatz and Rubio and Reps. Palazzo and Case to learn more about the AQUAA Act and the numerous benefits of an increased domestic production of healthful, sustainable, affordable seafood. Together we can build it here, and we can build it right.

Sincerely,

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Portsmouth, NH

Tony Dal Ponte  
Pacific Seafood  
Clackamas, OR

Bill Dewey  
Taylor Shellfish  
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