



For immediate release

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Learn Why the Future of Fishing is Actually Farming

Go to the seafood counter or local restaurant and over 91 percent of the seafood is shipped from thousands of miles away. If you are looking for a source of safe, sustainable, high quality, local seafood, you're probably having difficulty finding it.

In the U.S., the aquaculture industry works closely with government agencies and academic institutions to help ensure that fish and shellfish farmed in the United States meet the highest standards for environmental practices, sustainability and food safety, according to Mike Freeze, president of the National Aquaculture Association. Because U.S. wild harvest fisheries are well managed and most are at maximum sustainable yield, farming fish is the sensible and sustainable answer to meeting the growing demand for seafood.

Aquaculture or fish farming is the production of marine and freshwater organisms under controlled conditions for all or part of the life cycle. This includes finfish, shellfish and aquatic plants for human consumption, stocking in sport fishing ponds, enhancing wild populations, medical research, and for hobby use in fish tanks and backyard ponds.

Some fish like catfish and tilapia can be raised in ponds. This is probably the earliest form of aquaculture and was practiced in China and Egypt about 3,000 years ago. Fish like trout need moving freshwater and are raised in raceways. In raceways, the water is diverted from a natural source, flows through the system and is then returned to the source. Water exiting the system must be of the same or better quality than the receiving water. The most sophisticated systems are recirculating systems where the water is used in the system, cleaned and then reused. Since the water is reused in these systems, they can be located almost anywhere - even in the desert or in abandoned inner city buildings.

Offshore aquaculture operations can help supply the world with much needed protein. These systems are located far from shore and can take advantage of the miles of open-ocean around the world. Aquaculture is one of the most efficient ways to raise animal protein and shows great promise as a way to feed a growing and hungry world without compromising environmental quality. In 1979, Jacques Cousteau, an advocate for the marine environment, said, "We must plant the sea and herd its animals using the sea as farmers instead of hunters. That is what civilization is all about - farming replacing hunting."

(more)

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Press Release

The farming of oysters, clams and mussels helps to maintain environmental quality. Algae can grow rapidly during the summer and cause a “bloom”. When the bloom dies off, a high volume of the oxygen in the water is used. Because shellfish feed on algae, they can help keep the ecosystem system in balance so that more oxygen is available for other organisms. In addition, because of the three-dimensional structure of their shells, they provide habitats and hiding places for other animals. This adds to biodiversity which is a cornerstone of a healthy ecosystem.

Aquaculture has another important benefit - sustainability. Some species like sturgeon are facing extinction in the wild, but aquaculture is helping to ensure that future generations will still be able to enjoy both sturgeon and caviar. Another fish that is rapidly disappearing from its natural habitat is Atlantic salmon, but aquaculture is making it plentiful on menus and at seafood counters.

Fish produced in the United States are regulated from breeding to harvest and then through the processing and distribution steps. Fish farmers must follow a strict set of federal, state and, in some cases, local regulations. Those regulations prohibit the use of added hormones and antibiotics to enhance growth. Only a few drugs have been approved and must be used under the direction of a licensed veterinarian.

Many environmental organizations place U.S. farm-raised fish and shellfish on their “Best Seafood Choices” lists. U.S. farm-raised fish and shellfish are good choices for the environment and, because prices and supply are stable, they can provide a great-tasting, healthy, sustainable option for dinner

Visit the National Aquaculture Association website at www.thenaa.net to learn more.

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