

National Aquaculture Association Policy on Aquaculture Research

Background

Continued growth, new innovations and competitiveness in aquaculture depend upon focused research programs. Public funds expended on aquaculture research should strive to keep American farmers profitable and competitive in the culture of safe and nutritious food, bait, recreational fish, ornamentals, and other aquatic crops.

Publicly supported researchers and their institutions are facing many challenges in maintaining adequate funding support. They are increasingly looking to supplement grant funding through innovative methods and partnerships including private contracts, joint ventures, licensing of intellectual properties, foreign sources and personal consulting. This approach may help make research institutions more self-sufficient, however, it conflicts with the basic mission and ideas of the land grant institutions to carry out research and provide practical information to American farmers. The continued function of these institutions must be to find solutions to problems and create, but not control, technology thereby helping maintain the competitiveness of our farmers.

American aquatic farmers benefit from their strong, publicly supported research programs. Farmers need to have a larger role in determining their aquaculture research needs, demonstrating technology or carrying out on-farm research, and being the prime recipients of the results and benefits of publicly supported research. Congress should relieve university researchers from liability issues when collaborating with a farmer or group of farmers. Congress should also develop incentives and/or mechanisms for farmers to share ideas with universities which may lead to advancements in aquaculture technology.

Policy.

The NAA:

1. Recommends a publicly supported increase in aquaculture research, demonstration and development funding.
2. Supports direct participation of aquatic farmers and private industry stakeholders in all levels of research planning, carrying out of research programs, and dissemination of results. This includes strong participation by farmer advisory committees within USDA, land grant institutions, and other government agencies and research programs.
3. Encourages improved aquaculture research coordination within the federal government.

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4. Supports the ideal that the primary beneficiaries of publicly funded aquaculture research should be American farmers.
5. Encourages Congress to establish methods for farmers to develop their research ideas with the universities in such a manner that the farmer will benefit, the university will benefit, and other farmers will benefit without the fear of liability issues.
6. Supports University research that focuses on domestic aquaculture.
7. Encourages federal funding that helps integrate aquaculture with traditional agricultural practices, water reuse, and water management and conservation.