

National Aquaculture Association Policy on Quality Assurance and Seafood Safety

Background

Wholesome domestically farmed aquatic animal products are the cornerstone of success for the US aquaculture industry. Farm raised organisms are nutritious and of high quality. There is general consumer perception that domestically farm raised aquatic animals are wholesome, high quality products. However, consumer perceptions can be readily influenced by misinformation or a breakdown in product safety. Aquatic animal producer participation in quality assurance programs can help ensure continued production of wholesome products and enhance consumer perceptions. Quality assurance programs can also be used to discredit misinformation.

Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) plans are key to systematically identifying biological, chemical, and physical hazards that might impact food safety. The US Food and Drug Administration and the US Department of Agriculture Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) rely heavily on HACCP in managing seafood safety (quality assurance) at the processor level. Development of and compliance with a HACCP plan is required of seafood processors both domestically and internationally if they are to market seafood in the US. Several aquatic animal species associations have also developed voluntary producer/ production focused quality assurance plans based on the HACCP approach. These can be incorporated into a processors HACCP plan or used by those marketing live seafood for consumption or for recreation. Among other things, quality assurance plans should emphasize integrated aquatic animal health management and the importance of compliance with the US Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act.

Ultimately, producers, processors, distributors, and retailers must work cooperatively to ensure product wholesomeness.

Policy

The NAA encourages:

1. Participation in a finfish or shellfish producer quality assurance program by all producers of aquatic animals that might be consumed by people or other animals.
2. Individualized HACCP plan development and compliance by all domestic and international seafood processors.
3. Consumer education utilizing credible information about domestically produced seafood safety.