

# **National Aquaculture Association Policy on Seafood for Health, Safety and Security**

## Background

### *Nutrition*

Seafood provides key nutrients, lean protein, is low in saturated fat, and has been linked to a wide array of health benefits for the developing fetus, infants, and adults. Diet quality is not only important for reducing nutrient deficiency, but is now regarded as essential for preventing chronic diseases such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, coronary artery disease and cancers. Seafood can supply 50% or more of high quality protein, niacin, zinc, and vitamin B<sub>6</sub> and at least 10% of vitamins E and B<sub>12</sub>, thiamin, riboflavin, phosphorus, magnesium, iron, copper, potassium and linoleic acid needed in a healthy diet. Seafood is the primary source for omega-3 fatty acids in human diets. Consumption of omega-3 fatty acids is, among other things, associated with reduced cardiovascular disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Seafood is lower in saturated fats compared to other animal proteins. Reduced consumption of saturated fats has been associated with reduction in cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Overall, by providing a good source of animal protein containing all essential amino acids, essential fatty acids, vitamins, and minerals, seafood can contribute to a healthy diet and reduce the risks of malnutrition and disease. The 2015 USDA Dietary Guidelines for American's recommends that a healthy diet should include ample consumption of seafood. Domestic farm raised seafood provides a safe, wholesome and great tasting source of lean protein for Americans.

### *Food security*

Over 90% of the US seafood supply comes from international sources. Even if all US fisheries exports were consumed domestically, the US would still remain approximately 1 million metric tons short of fulfilling current domestic demand for seafood. With a rising seafood trade deficit of more than \$14 billion, this reliance on imports moves potential seafood jobs overseas (NOAA 2016). A country that cannot feed itself, that relies on foreign supplies for a vitally important feedstuff, is not a secure country. Nevertheless, domestic aquaculture contributes significantly to our total and local food supply. Domestic aquaculture is subject to federal and state environmental control, and this helps ensure that domestically raised seafood supply is sustainable. With the global human population anticipated to increase from the current 7 billion to 9-10 billion by 2050 and most wild fish capture fisheries at maximum sustainable yield, aquaculture production in the US will need to significantly increase if fish supplies are to adequately meet demand by mid-century.

(cont.)

### *Livelihood*

Domestic aquaculture is also an important source of individual and national wealth. The farming of seafood occurs throughout the US, in freshwater and saltwater. Currently, the US produces a relatively small amount of its seafood from aquaculture—only \$1.4 billion, weighing approximately 300,000 metric tons (661 million pounds) in 2013. Domestic aquaculture only makes up about 6 percent of total US seafood production by volume and 20 percent by value. The US marine aquaculture sector produced \$403 million worth of seafood weighing approximately 49,000 metric tons (108 million pounds) and is significantly smaller than the US freshwater sector. While US freshwater production has declined in recent years, US marine aquaculture production has been increasing at a rate of 5 percent a year on average for the 5-year period ending in 2013 (NOAA 2016).

### *Safety*

All consumers expect seafood to be safe and wholesome, and of good quality. Domestic seafood grown in US waters is subject to rigorous food safety requirements of the state and federal governments. Seafood processing in the US has been subject to US Food and Drug Administration mandated Hazard Analysis Critical Control (HACCP) food safety requirements since 1984. The recently enacted U.S. Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) is modeled after the seafood HACCP program. In 2016, the USDA Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) instituted a seafood safety program exclusively for all types of catfish. This inspection program should ensure all imported catfish meet the same food safety standards that domestic catfish have always had.

### Policy

It is the policy of the National Aquaculture Association that:

1. The US should encourage continued development of domestic aquaculture through federal policy and investment.
2. US farm-raised seafood is a best choice for US consumers.
3. Efforts should be continually directed at encouraging domestic consumption of US produced seafood.
4. Internationally grown seafood should meet the same food safety and sustainability standards as required of US producers.