



2960 Oxford Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3L 2W4 ■ Tel (902) 422-6234 ■ Fax (902) 422-6248

JUNE 5, 2020

OPINION PIECE / NEWS RELEASE

Nova Scotia marine fish farming is among the most environmentally sustainable food industries in the world.

It is an unfortunate reality that fish farming has been the subject of sustained misinformation campaigns in recent months. What makes this disturbing is that fish farming supports thousands of essential jobs in rural communities across Atlantic Canada, jobs that have become even more precious during these difficult economic times. For more than 40 years Nova Scotians have supported marine fish farming and recognized that it can coexist with other fisheries on working waterfronts.

There are categories of misinformation that repeatedly pop up:

1. Fish farming has impacted lobster stocks – false since landings and value in Nova Scotia have been consistently growing in recent years.
2. Fish farming negatively impacts tourism – false because tourism where fish farming has taken place for many years has continued to increase.
3. Fish farming degrades the environment – false because every fish farm is regularly monitored by government authorities as well as third party certification auditors and farms must receive approval to continue operating.
4. All fish farming should be moved to land because it would be environmentally safer – false because current industrial scale land-based recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS) technology requires the use of large amounts of land, water and power, thus having a significant environmental footprint, in particular greenhouse gas emissions. The aquaculture industry in Nova Scotia firmly believes that continued research and development of land-based fish farming and off-shore fish farming can complement our existing world class marine farming operations in Nova Scotia. Seafood farming in Nova Scotia needs to continue to expand if we are to realize our full potential in this Province.

The Collier Fairr Protein Index, which ranks global protein producers on environmental, social and governance issues against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, ranks salmon aquaculture at the top for sustainability. Fish and shellfish farmed in the ocean allow species to be raised in their natural environment. They are a top food choice for those who want a healthy option while reducing their environmental impact.



The “State of Salmon Aquaculture Technologies” Report released in February commissioned by Fisheries and Oceans Canada for B.C., highlights Canadian and global technological advancements in four emerging salmon farming production systems with the potential to be part of Nova Scotia’s future as well:

- Hybrids, involving a mix of land and marine-based systems,
- land-based recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS),
- floating, in-ocean closed-containment systems (CCS), and
- offshore open production systems.

All of these aquaculture technologies are at various stages of development and the aquaculture industry continues to actively participate in their development and testing. One hybrid system in particular, which involves extending the amount of time young fish spend in land-based hatcheries before being moved to ocean pens, is something the aquaculture industry is actively pursuing.

Recently, Nova Scotia Green Party leader Thomas Trappenberg, with the support of the Ecology Action Centre and the Atlantic Salmon Federation, have been spreading misinformation and supporting groups like the Twin Bays Coalition, Protect Liverpool Bay, St. Mary’s Bay Protectors, the Healthy Bays Network, and the Association for the Preservation of the Eastern Shore to push their political and divisive messages.

This is especially unfortunate because Mr. Trappenberg, in his capacity as a computer science professor at Dalhousie University, has voiced support for marine fish farming in the past. Other university and government scientists, researchers and students have done great and innovative work on many aspects of fish farming making it one of the most technologically advanced marine industries.

COVID-19 has shown us the importance of local food production and the essential role aquaculture plays. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations believes aquaculture will play an important role in addressing food security, climate change and ocean sustainability.

All forms of Nova Scotian aquaculture are based on science, follow best practices, are regulated by governments, maintain a focus on responsible food production, create jobs in coastal communities, and keep the carbon footprint of food production low. The facts are clear — Nova Scotia marine fish farming is one of the most sustainable ways to grow protein in the world.

Tom Smith
Executive Director
Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia