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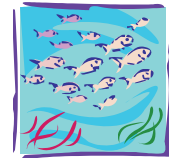
January 2005

Organic Aquaculture

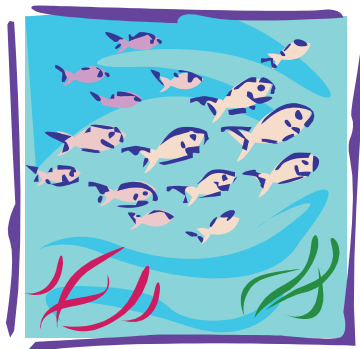
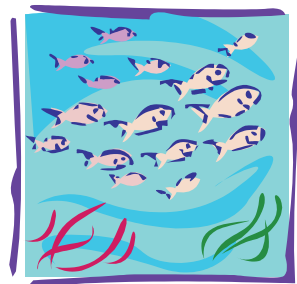
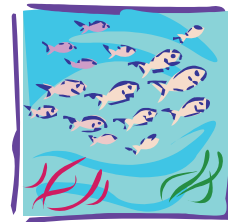


AFSIC Notes #5

Compiled by:
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Bill Thomas, and Ann Young



Alternative Farming Systems Information Center
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Organic Production in Aquaculture	3
Current Status of U.S. Standards for Organic Aquaculture.....	5
National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) Aquatic Animal Task Force.....	6
International Organic Aquaculture Standards.....	7
Market Outlook and Consumer Trends	9
Research and Development	10
Background Information	
Conventional Aquaculture	
Overview	11
Production Systems	12
Environmental Issues.....	13
Laws and Regulations.....	14
Organic Agriculture	
Overview	15
Standards and Certification.....	16
Bibliography.....	18
Author Index	37
Subject Index	42



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Introduction

Diminishing fishery harvests, wild fish food-safety issues, environmental concerns, increased fish consumption, and the increasing market share of organic foods have combined to focus attention on “organic aquaculture.” Consumer demand may well drive the organic production of finfish, shellfish, and other aquatic species into the mainstream during the next decade.

Organic aquaculture has attracted the attention of researchers from several academic disciplines as well as that of environmental advocates and entrepreneurial innovators. A small number of “certified” and non-certified organic fish and microalgae products have made it to the retail market place. While the regulatory specifics still need to be addressed, this new organic market niche has significant potential for growth in the future.

This publication briefly identifies and describes the important issues pertaining to organic aquaculture with regard to production technology, standards and laws, environmental and economic sustainability, research and development, and markets and trade. Presently, there are many contradictions and unresolved questions facing the organic aquaculture production and market sector. The authors have worked to present a snapshot of the situation today with the intention of providing an unbiased and neutral contribution to the dialog of discovery on this issue.

The information covered in this document – organic production in aquaculture; the current status of U.S. standards; the National Organic Standards Board Aquatic Animal Task Force; international organic aquaculture standards; marketing outlook and consumer trends; and research and development in organic aquaculture – is current and up-to-date as of December 2004. Background information pertaining to organic agricultural production and to conventional aquaculture is included in order to provide context for developments in organic aquaculture. This document highlights references to print and electronic documentation chosen from

representative sources. Referenced sources are indicated by abbreviated citations within the text; the complete citations and additional sources are found with the Selected Readings list at the end the section. A detailed companion bibliography is included at the end of this publication.



Selected Readings

The Future of Fish: Issues and Trends to 2020, by Christopher L. Delgado, Nikolas Wada, Mark W. Rosegrant, and Mahfuzuddin Ahmed. Washington, DC; Penang, Malaysia: International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI); WorldFish Center, 2003.

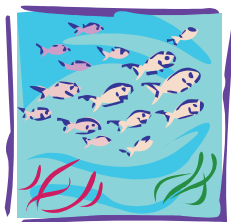
Online information/reviews: Additional materials related to this topic available at <http://www.ifpri.org/media/fish20031002.htm>
Full-text online: <http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/ib/ib15.pdf> (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

“Organic Aquaculture: Completing the First Decade,” by S. Bergleiter. *7th IFOAM International Conference on Trade in Organic Products: 2003 Mainstreaming Organic Trade: New Frontiers, Opportunities and Responsibilities, November 6-8, Bangkok, Thailand*, 2003.

Full-text online: http://www.greennetorganic.com/downloads/IFOAM%20speaker%20presentation%20-PDF/Presentation_Seminar%20E_Stefan%20Bergleiter.pdf (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

“U.S. Seafood Market in 2020: Strong Demand Likely Boon to Aquaculture,” by Howard M. Johnson. *Global Aquaculture Advocate*, November 2003.

Full-text online: <http://www.hmj.com/Seafood%20Vision%20Article.pdf> (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).



Defining “organic aquaculture” is very much a work-in-progress and, for many reasons, an endeavor marked by controversy. Members of both the organic and the aquaculture communities disagree on how, or even if, aquatic animal and plant production systems can qualify as “organic” as the term is commonly used. Any potential definition must be a multi-faceted one. “Organic” in the context of food production connotes standards and certification – a verifiable claim for the production process and production practices – as well as more

Organic Production in Aquaculture

elusive characteristics such as consumer expectation for food quality and safety and general environmental, social, and economic benefits for farmers and for society. The variety of species produced in aquacultural systems and vast differences in cultural requirements for finfish, shellfish, mollusks, and aquatic plants add to the complexity of defining this sector. Some species and some production systems may prove quite difficult to adapt to a traditional “organic” system. [See the *Conventional Aquaculture* section in this document for detail about existing production systems.]

Traditional organic farming systems “rely on ecologically based practices, such as cultural and biological pest management,

and virtually exclude the use of synthetic chemicals in crop production and prohibit the use of antibiotics and hormones in livestock production.” [Briefing Room: *Organic Farming and Marketing*, 2004] Sustainability, environmental stewardship, and holistic, integrated approaches to production are hallmarks of organic systems. Standards for organic cropping and terrestrial livestock husbandry practices have existed for decades. In recent years, standards have been incorporated into state and national organic rule making and certification requirements. [See *Organic Agriculture* background section in this document for detail about agricultural practices and standards.]

(Continued on page 4)

Organic Production in Aquaculture (continued)

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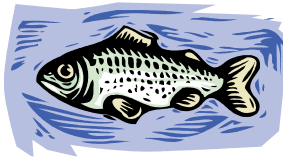
Interpreting practices and standards developed for terrestrial species into practices and standards relevant to aquatic species, both animal and plant, remains a major challenge for organic aquaculture. How can aquatic operations comply with the requirements for an organic system plan, for obtaining acceptable stock, for implementing health care monitoring and management, for maintaining prescribed "living conditions," for development and acceptance of allowed and prohibited substances lists, for organic feed requirements, for controlled post-harvest processing, for nutrient management, and for required animal identification and record-keeping?



Many specialists agree that the most immediate deterrent to production of organic animals is the issue of providing organically produced feed, especially for species requiring significant proportions of animal-based protein. Where will it come from? Can wild-caught fish and fish by-products be utilized as organic feed stock for farmed species? Should emphasis be placed on farming low-trophic species?

Other points of discussion:

- Criteria for evaluating the suitability of a production site for an organic aquaculture operation; specifically, how standards will be developed for the site of production to address nutrient concentration/effluent management and water testing parameters, chemical drift, the emergence and transfer of disease, the escape of captive species to the wild, biodiversity, and detrimental impacts on indigenous species;
- Guidelines to control practices used in aquaculture operations that are consistent with organic principles, especially with regard to chemicals administered to control diseases and parasites, and to accommodating "natural behavior" and animal welfare in closed systems;
- Induction of triploidy in fish species;
- Origin of livestock requirement for aquaculture operations that obtain stock or fry from wild populations;
- Status of "wild caught" fish and related by-products;
- Conversion requirements for producers wishing to change over to an organic system;
- Recordkeeping/traceability elements, and inspection practices pertinent to aquatic species; and
- Harmonization of organic aquaculture standards between countries.



Today, organic aquaculture production takes place primarily in Europe, where certified organic salmon, carp, and trout are grown and sold. Certified organic mussels, Tiger shrimp, white shrimp, and tilapia also are cultured in such diverse places as Vietnam, Peru, Ecuador, Chile, New Zealand, and Israel. Standards and certification procedures are set by

just a few certification agencies. Universal acceptance of any standards does not currently exist. [See the *International Organic Aquaculture Standards* section in this document for detail.] To risk investment in this sector, producers require formally recognized standards in order to communicate the advantages of organic aquaculture products to consumers. The key to the continued growth and development of organic aquaculture lies in resolving a number of issues that currently stand in the way of instituting internationally accepted certification standards.



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Further Comments of the Organic Trade Association (OTA) for the USDA-AMS-NOP Hearings on Organic Production and Handling of Aquatic Animals to be Labeled as Organic, by Tom Hutcheson. Federal Register Docket Number TM-00-03. May 3, 2000.
Full-text online: <http://www.ota.com/pp/otaposition/frc/fish.html> (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

"Growing Organic Seafood Sales," by Dan McGovern. *IntraFish* 2, no. 5 (May 2004): 14, 16-19.
Full-text online: <http://www.intrafish.com/pdf/download/2c95643bf128d4597b2176f78b462154/2004/5/14.pdf> (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

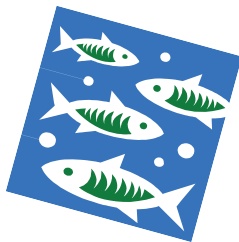
OMRI's Comments on Organic Standards for Aquatic Animals submitted to National Organic Program, by Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI). Federal Register Docket Number TM-00-03. May 17, 2000.
Full-text online: <http://www.omri.org/fishy.pdf> (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

"Organic Aquaculture: Current Standards and Future Prospects: Chapter 6," by Albert G. J. Tacon and Deborah J. Brister. *Organic Agriculture, Environment and Food Security*, edited by Nadia El-Hage Scialbba and Caroline Hattam. Environment and Natural Resources Series, 4. Rome, Italy: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, 2002. [NAL Call Number: OH540 .E68 no. 4]
Full-text online: <http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/005/Y4137E/y4137e06.htm> (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

Current Status of U.S. Standards for Organic Aquaculture

As of the writing of this document, the legal status of using the organic label in the United States for aquatic species, and the future of developing U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) certification standards for organic aquacultural products and aquatic species, are under review. USDA and National Organic Program (NOP) staff, and National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) members are currently studying the legal and rule-making latitude granted USDA in terms of several commodity areas including fish, both farmed and wild-caught.

The Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (OFPA), from which current USDA standards were derived, addressed "aquatic species" in its definition of livestock: "The term 'livestock' means any cattle, sheep, goats, swine, poultry, equine animals used for food or in the production of food, fish used for food, wild or domesticated game, or other non-plant life." [*Organic Foods Production Act of 1990, 6502 Definitions*] However, the Final Rule, as issued, did not present specific standards for the production and labeling of aquatic species or for aquaculture operations. Recognizing the lack of commonly accepted certification programs for aquatic operations, including aquaculture, and the limited models on which to base national standards, NOP staff made the decision to delay presenting standards for selected commodities, including aquatic species, until a later date.



The Final Rule, under the heading "Additional NOP Standards for Specific Production Categories," states: "Many commenters asked that the NOP include in the final rule certification standards for apiculture, greenhouses, mushrooms, aquatic species, culinary herbs, pet food, and minor animal species (e.g., rabbits) food. The NOP intends to provide standards for categories where the Act provides the authority to promulgate standards. During the 18-month implementation period, the NOP intends to publish for comment certification standards for apiculture, mushrooms, greenhouses and aquatic animals. These standards will build upon the existing final rule and will address only the unique requirements necessary to certify these specialized operations." [*Federal Register*, p. 80556-57]

Certain aquatic species and harvesting systems fall under OFPA and NOP guidance pertaining to wild-crop harvesting. "Wild-crop producers must comply with the same organic system plan requirements and conditions, as applicable to their operation, as their counterparts who produce crops and livestock. Wild harvest operations are production systems, and they must satisfy the general requirement that all practices included in their organic system plan must maintain or improve the natural resources of the opera-

tion, including soil and water quality. We modified the practice standard to emphasize that wild harvest production is linked to a designated site and expect that a certifying agent would incorporate mapping and boundary conditions into the organic system plan requirements. Finally, we changed the definition of 'wild crop' to specify that harvest takes place from a 'site' instead of 'from land,' thereby allowing for aquatic plant certification." [*Federal Register*, p. 80566]



Selected Readings

Applying Organic Principles to Aquaculture Systems: Understanding Proposed Organic Certification Standards for Farmed Salmon: Market Trends in Aquaculture, by Nathan Pelletier. June 2003.

Full-text online: <http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa/services/aquaculture-standards.html> (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

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Full-text online: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nosb/archives/minutes/March01/attachments/04.pdf> (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

Federal Register: Rules and Regulations, vol. 65, no. 246, 80647-80684, December 21, 2000.

Full-text online: http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fedreg/a001221c.html [scroll down to Agricultural Marketing Service] (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

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Full-text online: <http://aquanic.org/news/2000/organic.htm> (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

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Full-text online: <http://www.fw.umn.edu/isees/OrganicAquaculture/Workshop/finalrep.pdf> (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

Organic Foods Production Act of 1990, by U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service, National Organic Program. No Date.

Full-text online: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/archive/OFPA.html> (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

Unique Features of Microalgae Culture Systems: Organic Spirulina Production. National Organic Standards Board Meeting, March 6-7, 2001, Buena Park, CA, by Amha Belay. [March 2001?].

Full-text online: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nosb/archives/minutes/March01/attachments/06.pdf> (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) Aquatic Animal Task Force

"The Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (OFPA), part of the 1990 Farm Bill, authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to appoint a 15-member National Organic Standards Board (NOSB). The board's main mission is to assist the Secretary in developing standards for substances to be used in organic production. The NOSB also advises the Secretary on other aspects of implementing the national organic program." Recommendations made by the NOSB are not official policy until they are approved and adopted by U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). [*National Organic Standards Board* Web site, 2004]

In September 2000, the NOSB named six of its members to an Aquatic Animal Task Force "to evaluate aquaculture and wild capture aquatic animal operations and to assess the feasibility of developing organic production and handling standards for their certification." [*NOSB Task Force Recommendations*, May 2001]



Selected Readings

Emergency Wartime Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2003, Public Law 108-11, 117 Stat. 589, Title II - Miscellaneous and Technical Appropriations, Chapter 1, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, and Related Agencies, General Provisions, Sec 2105. Wild Seafood, by U.S. Congress. April 16, 2003. Full-text online: http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=108_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ011.108 (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

Formation of a Task Force on Standards for Aquatic Animals, by National Organic Standards Board. [October 2004?]. Full-text online: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nosb/meetingbooks/Oct2004/AquaticAnimalsTaskForce.pdf> (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

Livestock Committee Final Recommendations. Aquatic Species Standards. National Organic Standards Board Draft Meeting Minutes, October 17, 2001, Washington, DC, by Eric Sideman. October 17, 2001. Full-text online: http://www.ams.usda.gov/nosb/October2001Minutes/10_17_01.html (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

The National Organic Standards Board Aquatic Animal Task Force Recommendation on Operations that Produce Aquatic Animals, by National Organic Standards Board, Aquatic Animal Task Force. May 30, 2001. Full-text online: <http://www.fw.umn.edu/isees/OrganicAquaculture/TskFrcRec5.01.doc> OR <http://www.fw.umn.edu/isees/OrganicAquaculture/orgaqua.htm> (Click on "Read the Aquatic Task Force Final Recommendations here.") (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

National Organic Standards Board Home Page, by National Organic Standards Board. No Date. Full-text online: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nosb/index.htm> (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

National Organic Program Scope, by National Organic Standards Board. Policy Development Committee. September 28, 2004. Full-text online: http://www.ams.usda.gov/nosb/meetingbooks/Oct2004/NOPScope9_04.pdf (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

The Task Force compiled a report of recommendations which covered issues related to organically produced aquatic animals in general, and aquaculture specifically. Subtopics included "origin of livestock," "livestock feed," "health care management," "livestock living conditions," and "identification and record keeping." In October 2001, the NOSB accepted the report and unanimously approved the following recommendations:

- Standards be developed for the production of farmed aquatic animals that reflect an innovative approach to organic certification while remaining fully consistent with the statutory requirements of the Organic Foods Production Act
- If standards are developed for farmed aquatic animals, we recommend that the National Organic Program and the

National Organic Standards Board use the Aquatic Animal Task Force report as guidance.

- No standards be developed for wild caught aquatic animals

[*NOSB Draft Meeting Minutes*, October 17, 2001]

From the time the Final Recommendations of the Task Force were approved by the NOSB in October 2001, the National Organic Program (NOP) has struggled to define their scope of enforcement for the certification of nontraditional products including aquatic species. In a Directive dated April 13, 2004, the NOP stated, "Although OFPA provided coverage for organic aquatic animal standards, NOP has not developed any standards for proposal to the public for comment." [National Organic Program Scope, September 28, 2004] Additionally, in the period since 2001, a rider to the Emergency Wartime Supplemental Appropriations Act regarding organic standards for wild seafood was passed in April 2003; "Notwithstanding the requirement of section 2107(a)(1)(A) requiring products to be produced only on certified organic farms, the Secretary shall allow, through regulations promulgated after public notice and opportunity for comment, wild seafood to be certified or labeled as organic."

In October 2004, the Livestock Committee of the NOSB recommended the establishment of a new task force on aquatic animals to provide guidance for the creation of aquatic animal standards. This Task Force will be comprised of two working groups; one for wild-caught and one for farmed aquatic species. The Task Force responsibilities will be two-fold:

- 1) After consideration of the 2001 Aquatic Animals Task Force report, recommend to the NOSB whether organic standards for wild caught and farmed aquatic animals should be developed at the present time, and if so, the scope of the standards.
- 2) If standards should be developed at the present time, recommend draft standards to the NOSB.

[*Formation of a Task Force on Standards for Aquatic Animals*, October 2004]

International Organic Aquaculture Standards

Several countries and international organizations have addressed or mandated standards for organic aquaculture. In the 2002 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations document, *Organic Agriculture, Environment and Food Security*, Tacon and Brister cite the range of international organic aquacultural standards. "Despite its late start and modest size, the organic aquaculture sector currently boasts 20-25 private and non-private certifying bodies...They have a diverse set of aquaculture standards which sometimes vary considerably from country to country, certifier to certifier, and species to species." Although this summary is presented by the FAO, the FAO's food standards body, the Codex Alimentarius Commission, has not yet made recommendations for aquaculture in its provisions for organic livestock. Thus, while some international standards may be used to help formulate U.S. organic aquaculture standards, no one standard is definitive.

The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) is another international body that is attempting to create guidelines that will normalize organic production and certification worldwide. "IFOAM's Organic Guarantee System unites the organic world through a common system of standards, verification, and market identity. It is the practical realization of IFOAM's commitment to harmonize an international guarantee of organic integrity." Through its IFOAM Norms document which is comprised of the IFOAM Basic Standards for Organic Production and Processing (IBS) and the IFOAM Accreditation Criteria for Bodies Certifying Organic Production and Processing (IAC); and its international membership of certification bodies, IFOAM's guidelines for aquaculture, currently in draft form, will impact organic certification organizations worldwide.



Selected Readings

Applying Organic Principles to Aquaculture Systems: Understanding Proposed Organic Certification Standards for Farmed Salmon: Market Trends in Aquaculture, by Nathan Pelletier. June 2003.

Full-text online: <http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa/services/aquaculture-standards.html> (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

"Aquaculture," by Australian Certified Organic and Biological Farmers of Australia. *Organic Standard*, Section 7.8, Version 6 ed. Chermside, Qld., Australia: Australian Certified Organic, August 2003. pp. 71-72.

Full-text online: http://www.australianorganic.com.au/_files/Organic_Standard_Version6_REVISIONS.pdf (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

"Aquaculture," by Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, Quarantine and Export Services, Organic Produce Export Committee. *National Standard for Organic and Bio-Dynamic Produce*, Section 3.21, Third ed. Canberra, Australia: Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, December 2002. pp. 31-34.

Full-text online: http://www.affa.gov.au/corporate_docs/publications/pdf/quarantine/national_standards.pdf OR available from the Quarantine and Export Services, Organic and Bio-dynamic Products, Legislation Web page at <http://www.affa.gov.au/content/output.cfm?ObjectID=192BA6DF-3BF8-43E9-98E81CFD0E3DB8CC> (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

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Full-text online: <http://arkiv.krav.se/arkiv/regler/Standards2004EditionJuly.pdf> (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

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(Continued on page 8)

Selected Readings: International Organic Aquaculture Standards (continued)

(Continued from page 7)

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"Fish and Crustacea," by the National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia (NASAA). *Standards for Organic Agricultural Production*, Section 30, 2003. pp. 43-44.

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Full-text online: <http://www.soilassociation.org/web/sa/saweb.nsf/librarytitles/19426.html> (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).

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Full-text online: http://www.bioland.de//bioland/richtlinien/bioland-standards_4_2004.pdf (accessed Dec. 15, 2004).



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Market Outlook and Consumer Trends

Consumer and market studies confirm a growing demand for both organic food products and for fish and related food products coming from convention aquaculture. Despite the unresolved status of the certification and labeling of organic aquatic animals and plants in the U.S., the parallel successes of both the organic livestock and conventional aquaculture markets have encouraged producers involved in both sectors to explore niche markets for organic aquacultural products.

There are documented trends in the growth of other organic livestock sectors, and in the sales of "natural," hormone-free, and antibiotic-free fish and shellfish. This increasing demand has started to drive producer and retail interest in aquacultural products that have a "certified organic" label. "Burgeoning consumer interest in organically grown foods has opened new market opportunities for producers and is leading to a transformation in the organic foods industry," summarizes a current U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Economic Research Service (ERS) report. It further clarifies the organic market situation, "Once a niche product sold in a limited number of retail outlets, organic foods are currently sold in a wide variety of venues including farmers markets, natural product supermarkets, conventional supermarkets, and club stores. Many U.S. manufacturers and distributors are specializing in processing and marketing organic products, while some longtime manufacturers of conventional products have introduced organic items to their product lines. As a result, an ever-widening array of organic agricultural and food products is now available." [Dimitri and Greene, 2002, p. 1]

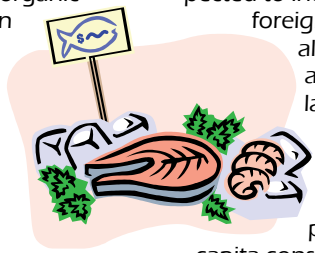
U.S. aquaculture is also a growing sector of the agricultural market, although experiencing considerable international competition. Recent ERS reports have supported this point. In the October 2003 USDA *Aquaculture Outlook*, author David Harvey observed that "Although beset with questions about the production of aquatic species, aquaculture is expected to continue to grow as a source of fish, shellfish, and mollusks. The potential for aquaculture production to expand and compete with wild-harvest seafood and other livestock products is readily evident in the continued growth in imported aquaculture products."

Additionally, in the subsequent *Aquaculture Outlook*, Harvey reported "With a stronger domestic economy and higher prices for livestock and poultry products, domestic aquacultural production is expected to increase in 2004....Imports of foreign aquacultural products are also expected to expand, but at a slower rate than seen over the last several years."

Consumer demand for fish will also play a role in the future of aquaculture. ERS projections point to not only increased per capita consumption of fish in the U.S., but to growth in the number of older Americans, who traditionally eat more fish than younger people. "Fish and fruits are predicted to lead the increase in total consumption, with about 30-percent growth over the next two decades." [Biing-Hwan, 2003]

In a Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) report from 2002, Brister and Tacon

attempt to approximate the current international production for organic aquaculture. "Although no official statistical data are available concerning the global production of certified organic aquaculture products, it is estimated that total production in 2000 was only about 5,000 metric tonnes, primarily from European countries." Later in the report this estimate is used to chart potential future production, "Based on current estimates of certified organic aquaculture production and an anticipated compound annual growth rate of 30 percent from 2001 to 2010, 20 percent from 2011 to 2020, and 10 percent from 2021 to 2030, it is estimated that production will increase 240-fold from 5,000 tonnes in 2000 to 1.2 [million] tonnes by 2030. Such a production of certified aquatic products would be equivalent to 0.6 percent of the total estimated aquaculture production in 2030." This analysis parallels the outlook for organic and aquacultural production in the U.S. and may encourage U.S. producers to enter this market.



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Research and Development

Aquatic species, both animal and plant; ecological situations and locations; and various production systems, both marine and freshwater; are now under scrutiny in order to determine adaptability to organic production systems. Concern about the production and handling requirements that organic standards would impose and the overarching environmental impacts that organic systems attempt to address has pointed research and development efforts in some new directions. Current research activities with important implications for the organic aquaculture industry include: alternative feeds, especially protein sources from grain and oilseed plants; culture of low-trophic aquatic species; disease management and use of natural and alternative medicines; polyculture and multi-species systems; self-filtering systems; techniques for expanded recovery of fishery by-catch and waste for use in organic systems; implications of using closed containment systems; environmentally sound effluent management systems; and consumer studies related to food preferences and purchasing habits.

The most recent World Aquaculture Society meeting, held in Honolulu, Hawaii, March 1-5, 2004, included several presentations by leading researchers in the aquaculture field dealing with organic-related activities. Additionally, some key international research into organic aquaculture has resulted from on-farm experimentation by current producers of certified organic aquacultural products. The experiences of these producers serve as case studies for further exploration of research needs in organic aquaculture.

In the U.S., the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides leadership and funding for aquaculture research, technology development, and extension programs. The Agricultural Research Service (ARS), the primary research agency within USDA, has identified aquaculture feeds, water use and reuse, effluent management, social sustain-

ability, and environmental sustainability as problems to be addressed through the Sustainability and Environmental Compatibility of Aquaculture component of its action plan for the aquaculture national programs. Some of the research objectives of the organic aquacultural community may be addressed through this mechanism.



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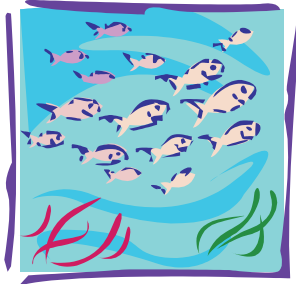
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The foundation for commercial aquaculture in the U.S. was laid more than 100 years ago. During the late 1860s, Spencer F. Baird, assistant secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, lobbied Congress to fund studies about a deteriorating fisheries situation, resulting in the creation of the U.S. Fish and Fisheries Commission in 1871. Baird, as the first Commissioner, instigated a research program in the marine sciences which helped to establish the basis of government-sponsored research and development in aquaculture and oceanography. In the next century, aquaculture progressed from the domain of hobbyists and hatcheries to an industry with large institutional support. For example, by 1960, several universities had developed aquaculture programs in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. As the outlook for fisheries continued to raise concerns, aquaculture acquired increasing status as an alternative source of foodfish. It became not only a profitable industry, but it also assumed an important role in addressing food security issues in developing countries.

The 1970s and 1980s, saw an increase in the support and scope of aquacultural activities. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) established aquaculture projects in developing nations. The National Aquaculture Act, passed by Congress in 1980, mandated the establishment of a National Aquaculture Development Plan, published in 1983. Regional aquacultural centers were created through the efforts of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in the mid-1980s to support industry research needs. Additionally, the World Mariculture Society, later the World Aquacultural Society (WAS), became the leading organization of aquaculture professionals during this period. [Stickney, 1996]

This investment in aquaculture has returned results. According to the USDA,

Conventional Aquaculture: Overview

Economic Research Service (ERS), "Between 1980 and 1998, the value of U.S. aquaculture production rose over 400 percent. The 1998 Census of Aquaculture reported farm-level sales of \$972 million." The ERS also reported that "the catfish industry is the largest sector in U.S. aquaculture, accounting for almost half of all sales. Other major foodfish species grown in the United States are trout, salmon, tilapia, hybrid striped bass, sturgeon, walleye, and yellow perch." Additional farmed species include oysters, clams, baitfish, ornamental fish, alligator, turtles and algae. Most of the farmed aquatic species in the U.S. are raised in upland freshwater systems and a mixture of operations comprises the balance of production. [Briefing Room: Aquaculture, 2004]

The October 2003 ERS publication *Aquacultural Outlook* explained, "U.S. producers are at a disadvantage in the production of warm water species that require large expanses of coastal property, they do have some advantages for cool or cold water species, especially those that can be grown in fresh water on a mostly grain-based diet." [Harvey, 2003, p. 1]

In terms of trade the ERS reports, "While the United States is a major seafood ex-

porter, its exports of aquaculture products are relatively small: some farm-raised trout and salmon chiefly to Canada and Mexico and oysters and clams to Canada. The catfish industry has been attempting to develop export markets in Europe but has met with only limited success. The ornamental fish industry exports its products to a number of countries, but the United States is a net importer of ornamental fish. On the other hand, the United States is a major importer of farm-raised seafood products. The largest categories of imported aquaculture products are shrimp, salmon, and tilapia." [Briefing Room: Aquaculture, 2004]

The outlook for aquaculture worldwide is also growing. "According to FAO statistics, aquaculture's contribution to global supplies of fish, crustaceans and molluscs continues to grow, increasing from 3.9 percent of total production by weight in 1970 to 27.3 percent in 2000. Aquaculture is growing more rapidly than all other animal food producing sectors. Worldwide, the sector has increased at an average compounded rate of 9.2 percent per year since 1970, compared with only 1.4 percent for capture fisheries and 2.8 percent for terrestrial farmed meat production systems." [FAO, 2002, p. 26]



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Conventional Aquaculture: Production Systems

Aquaculture is defined as the production of aquatic animals and plants under controlled conditions for all or part of their lifecycle. [Briefing Room: Aquaculture, 2004] The combination of the environment, equipment, and techniques selected for the farming of an aquatic species is referred to as the aquaculture production or cultural system. Several different types of systems have been developed based on availability of environmental resources and the type of species being raised. Environmental factors that can influence aquacultural system and species selection include salinity of the water (marine, brackish and fresh), seasonal climate, watershed drainage, and tides. Particular systems are most commonly found in the U.S. region where the climate is appropriate to a certain species: trout and salmon in the Northwest, catfish and other warmwater species in the Southeast, and marine species in Hawaii, California and the Gulf States. The major aquaculture systems are cage culture, pond, raceway, recirculating and integrated. Each of these systems has characteristics that may lead to consideration for organic production. A short description and selected resources for each type of system are presented below.

Cage culture

Cage culture utilizes hanging or floating containers that are anchored to remain in location. The open nature of the structures allows for natural water movement, such as tides and currents, to provide water circulation for oxygenation, delivery of nutrients and removal of wastes. Bottom culture and other systems for mollusk species or net-pens are some methods that also use open water flow as a main component of the production system.

Ponds

Ponds are constructed outdoors using earthen dams or by taking advantage of topographical depressions. They are generally clustered in groups covering several acres. The water source used to fill the ponds can be runoff or pumped from wells. Drainage and aeration equipment is employed to control the water level and quality of the system.

Raceways

Also known as flow-through systems, raceways are generally comprised of rectangular or circular tanks with a high volume, constant source of flowing water. Water sources such as wells, springs or streams that provide consistent water temperature, flow rate and quality are preferred. These systems are designed to flush accumulated waste products through or out of the system for collection.

Integrated Systems

Several methods of integrated aquaculture, such as polyculture or aquaponics, are currently in use. Polyculture is the simultaneous culture of two or more plant or animal species. Aquaponics incorporates recirculating aquaculture and hydroponic growing techniques to utilize waste water from fish culture for production of a vegetative crop. The plants grown may improve water quality through biological filtration of excess



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nutrients and addition of dissolved oxygen. The particulars of an aquacultural operation may generally determine which type of integrated system will be implemented. This type of system is attractive to some producers since it allows for the production of two crops using one infrastructure. However, some producers may use one or more of the species to provide benefit to another species solely for the favorable result and not as a harvestable product.

Recirculating Systems

Recirculating systems, predominantly employed with closed tanks, use intensive filtration and water treatment systems to maintain the quality of the water, which is reused many times before being replaced. Due to the small volume of water needed to operate this system, it can be used in many settings and in most climates. The waste from these systems is generally high in nutrients and may be used for land application in some operations.

Selected Readings: Conventional Aquaculture: Production Systems, (continued)

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Conventional Aquaculture: Environmental Issues

Aquacultural activities, like their terrestrial farming counterparts, affect surrounding ecosystems. Despite numerous regulations aimed at ameliorating these effects, environmental impacts currently associated with some operations and practices draw criticism of the industry. Concerns include pollution from solid waste and effluent by-products, pesticide and antibiotic residues, introductions of species to non-native environments, and transmission of disease between individual organisms and to other species. These impacts have been documented across several production systems and types of farmed species.

Developments in research and policy are increasingly being focused on resolving these environmental problems. Members of the aquaculture community believe that sustainable and ecologically based management practices can lead to environmentally benign aquacultural operations. One aquaculture researcher envisions a future where "ecological agriculture research is oriented to the design, development, and monitoring of aquatic farming systems that preserve and enhance the form and functions of the natural and social environments in which they are suited. Aquaculture depends upon inputs from various food, processing, transportation and other industries, and can produce valuable, uncontaminated wastewaters and fish processing wastes, all of which can be a vital part of an ecological system that can be planned and organized for community-based aquatic foods production – and

natural ecosystem rehabilitation, reclamation and enhancement – not degradation." [Costa-Pierce, 2002, p. 343] Additionally, aquaculture may provide some relief to over-fishing pressures for some species by supplying rising consumer demand for these products. Thus, the opportunity exists to create aquacultural systems that are models of environmental stewardship. The development and implementation of organic production practices may lead the way in this effort.



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Conventional Aquaculture: Laws and Regulations

In the United States, responsibility for regulating aquacultural activities is shared between several Federal, State and some local agencies. Federal agencies regulate activities that fall within the scope of their mandated duties. For instance, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is responsible for waste water permitting across all industries and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) covers food safety regulations and drug approvals. Additionally, legal definitions of aquaculture and aquacultural practices, ownership of animals or plants that may also be considered wildlife, water rights for fresh and marine bodies, and other such legal "principles" are established by Federal decision-makers. Several Federal agencies should be consulted when determining which regulations are applicable to aquaculture.

State and local governments generally regulate activities that are permitted or licensed at the community level. Main classes of permits deal with building, water use, waste discharge, species certification related to wildlife management, marketing or processing, and trade. Often, regulations are in effect based on the siting of the operation: inland, wetland, coastal and off-shore. Due mainly to environmental concerns, requirements for each type of operation are varied. Each State administers aquacultural permitting based on its own rules. Thus, regulations can vary considerably among geographic locations.

Internationally, aquaculture laws and regulations can be as varied and decentralized as the U.S. laws. In his book, *The Law of Aquaculture*, Howarth lists many court cases, statutes and regulations in Britain that guide aquacultural activities such as licensing, disease control, water management, predator control, harvesting, and marketing guidelines. Many more examples of this distributed approach to aquacultural laws are presented in a United Nations (UN) review of aquaculture legislation globally. In addition to many examples throughout the text of national-level legislation that covers requirements such as licensing, land and water rights, environmental protection and fish disease and transportation; the authors of the UN report identify categories for government of aquaculture worldwide. These categories are: countries that have established a specific set of rules for aquaculture, countries with some aquacultural legislation to cover various species, systems or disputed circumstances,

and countries with basic laws or clauses of other laws (generally Fisheries laws) that permit aquaculture. A great deal of variation within and between government regulations exists worldwide.

The UN has also played a significant role in the development of international law for seas and fisheries that has direct impact on coastal or open ocean aquacultural operations. The 1982 United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) set offshore territorial boundaries that establish zones of exclusive economic and fisheries rights for coastal nations. While some nations have not ratified this convention, it is the *de facto* set of guidelines, until changed, for the world's oceans. Furthermore, the UN has developed a *Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries*, based on international

laws including UNCLOS. In the introduction to this document, an explanation of the scope of and impetus for these rules is presented:

"Fisheries, including aquaculture, provide a vital source of food, employment, recreation, trade and economic well being for people throughout the world, both for present and future generations and should therefore be conducted in a responsible manner. This Code sets out principles and international standards of behaviour for responsible practices with a view to ensuring the effective conservation, management and development of living aquatic resources, with due respect for the ecosystem and biodiversity." Thus, aquacultural operations may be obliged to meet principles of conduct in addition to routine legal regulations.



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Commercial organic agriculture has been practiced in the United States for more than fifty years. Today, it is a small but rapidly growing sector of the agricultural economy. Certified organic cropland for corn, soybeans, and other major crops more than doubled from 1992 to 1997, and doubled again between 1997 and 2001. Two organic livestock sectors - poultry and dairy - grew even faster. [Data: *Organic Production*, 2004]

"Organic food production promotes biodiversity, biological cycles and biological activity. Organic farmers aim to manage food production as an integrated, whole system that is, as Fred Kirschenmann, former National Organic Standards Board Livestock Chair describes, an 'organism' whose individual parts mesh together into one whole production system. For example, in livestock production, the organic farmer relies on biological processes to integrate the management of individual parts including nutrient inputs, the animals themselves, the environment in which they live and the waste that is produced. These individual parts are connected, each component depending on every other component. When these parts are balanced within the production system, the system can be considered sustainable - one of the goals of organic production." [Brister and Kapuscinski, 2000, p. 1]

From a marketing perspective, growth in retail sales has equaled 20 percent or more annually since 1990. Organic products are now available in nearly 20,000 natural foods stores, and are sold in 73 percent of all conventional grocery stores. Fresh produce is the top-selling organic category in retail sales. Nine U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) agencies have expanded research, regulatory, and other programs on organic agriculture. Programs include crop insurance for organic farmers, information and outreach providers, and promotion of organic exports. The USDA National Organic Program (NOP) oversees the creation, implementation, and administration of the USDA organic standard. [Dimitri and Greene, 2002, p. iii]

Organic Agriculture: Overview

"U.S. producers are turning to organic farming systems as a potential way to lower input costs, decrease reliance on nonrenewable resources, capture high-value markets and premium prices, and boost farm income. Organic farming systems rely on ecologically based practices, such as cultural and biological pest management, and virtually exclude the use of synthetic chemicals in crop production and prohibit the use of antibiotics and hormones in livestock production. Many producers, manufacturers, distributors, and retailers specialize in growing, processing, and marketing an ever widening array of organic food and fiber products." [Briefing Room: *Organic Farming and Marketing*, 2004]

Internationally, organic agriculture has achieved progress similar to that in the U.S. A 2003 survey, undertaken in collaboration with the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), summarized its main findings:

- "Organic agriculture is practiced in almost all countries of the world, and its share of agricultural land and farms is growing. The total organically managed area is more than 24 million hectares world-wide. In addition, the area of certified "wild harvested plants" is at least a further 10.7 million hectares, according to various certification bodies;
- "The market for organic products is growing, not only in Europe and North American (which are the major markets) but also in many other countries. It is valued at 23 billion USD (2002)
- "Official interest in organic agriculture is emerging in many countries, shown by the fact that many countries have fully implemented regulation on organic farming or are in the process of drafting regulation." [Willer and Yussefi, 2004, p. 7]



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Organic Agriculture: Standards and Certification

Prescribed production and product handling standards accompanied by state and/or private certification systems are an important aspect of organic farming, marketing, and trade. Certification processes provide consumers with assurance that they are buying a consistent product and farmers and handlers with a "level playing field," in terms of management and marketing. "At least 100 regional or national standards have been developed worldwide. Several countries are formulating or have adopted laws and regulations on organic production and processing and on certification requirements to control the use of labels indicating organic origin." [Jacobsen, 2002, p. 4]



October 2002 saw the full implementation of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Organic Standards (CFR 7 Part 205). Since that date, all agricultural products that are labeled and marketed in the U.S. as "organic" must meet USDA standards and be certified by a USDA-accredited certifying agent. The Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (OFPA) mandated uniform standards for the organic industry. "Congress passed the Act to: (1) establish national standards governing the marketing of certain agricultural products

as organically produced products; (2) assure consumers that organically produced products meet a consistent standard; and (3) facilitate commerce in fresh and processed food that is organically produced." [Background and History]

The completed standards/Final Rule appeared in the December 21, 2000 *Federal Register* and was activated on April 21, 2001. "This final rule establishes the National Organic Program (NOP or program) under the direction of the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), an arm of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). This national program will facilitate domestic and international marketing of fresh and processed food that is organically produced and assure consumers that such products meet consistent, uniform standards.

"This program establishes national standards for the production and handling of organically produced products, including a National List of substances approved for and prohibited from use in organic production and handling. This final rule establishes a national-level accreditation program to be administered by AMS for State officials

and private persons who want to be accredited as certifying agents. Under the program, certifying agents will certify production and handling operations in compliance with the requirements of this regulation and initiate compliance actions to enforce program requirements.

"The final rule includes requirements for labeling products as organic and containing organic ingredients. This final rule also provides for importation of organic agricultural products from foreign programs determined to have equivalent organic program requirements. This program is authorized under the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990, as amended." [Federal Register, p. 80548]

To help clarify the overarching principles that describe "organic agriculture," the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) presented a definition in 1995: "Organic agriculture is an ecological production management system that promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles and soil biological activity. It is based on minimal use of off-farm inputs and on management practices that restore, maintain and enhance ecological harmony. 'Organic' is a labeling term that denotes products produced under the authority of the Organic Foods Production Act.

(Continued on page 17)

Organic Agriculture: Standards and Certification (continued)

(Continued from page 16)

"The principal guidelines for organic production are to use materials and practices that enhance the ecological balance of natural systems and that integrate the parts of the farming system into an ecological whole. Organic agriculture practices cannot ensure that products are completely free of residues; however, methods are used to minimize pollution from air, soil and water. Organic food handlers, processors and retailers adhere to standards that maintain the integrity of organic agricultural products. The primary goal of organic agriculture is to optimize the health and productivity of interdependent communities of soil life, plants, animals and people." [Final Minutes, 1995]

There are currently 94 USDA-accredited certifying agents, 34 of which are located outside the United States. These agents are indicative of a strong domestic and international presence overseeing organic certification and standards worldwide. While there is not one internationally recognized organic standard, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), founded in 1972, has developed Basic Standards and an International Organic Accreditation Service (IOAS) through which certifying agents may become "IFOAM accredited."

IFOAM has also worked in collaboration with other entities including the Food and Agriculture Organization/ World Health Organization Food Standards Programme Codex Alimentarius and with the European Union which enacted a regulation governing organic production and foods in 1991. Most European countries also rely on their own organic legislation. Other countries with organic regulations include Argentina, Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Japan, and New Zealand. [Organic research.com, 2004]



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(Continued from page 34)

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(Continued on page 36)

(Continued from page 35)

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Author Index

- 62nd Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference 310
 Ackefors, H. 315
 Ad Hoc EIFAC/EC Working Party on Market Perspectives for European Freshwater Aquaculture 30
 Adelman, Ira R. 251
 Advanced BioNutrition Corporation 207
 Ahmed, Mahfuzuddin 155, 175
 Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station 298
 Alderman, D.J. 280, 358
 Allan, G.L. 219
 Allshouse, Jane 152
 Alternative Farming Systems Information Center 389
 Anadu, D. I. 266
 Anderson, J.L. 161
 Anderson, Robert 66
 Aquatic Animal Task Force 98, 100
 Aquatic Animal Task Force. Aquaculture Working Group 63, 64
 Arthur, J.R. 329
 Asche, F. 159
 Association of 1890 Research Directors 233
 Auburn University. International Center for Aquaculture and Aquatic Environments 260, 261, 262
 Australian Certified Organic and Biological Farmers of Australia 105
 Avery, Jimmy 250
 Bailey, D.S. 249
 Bailly, Denis 329
 Baird, Donald J. 287
 Baker, B. 44
 Bardach, John E. 338
 Barg, Uwe C. 318
 Barho, L. 266
 Beauregard, Robert 71
 Belay, Amha 62
 Ben Ezra, D. 275
 Bentsen, H. B. 192
 Berger, W.H. 319
 Bergleiter, S. 22, 25, 30, 33
 Beveridge, Malcolm C. M. 300, 325
 Biing-Hwan Lin 152
 Bio-Gro New Zealand 107
 Bio Suisse - Association of the Swiss Organic Agriculture Organisations 111, 123
 BIOCENTINELA 211
 Bioland 114
 Bjorndal, K.A. 319
 Black, Kenneth D. 304
 Blakely, David R. 257
 Bocek, Alex 262
 Bonucci, Nicola 374
 Borgese, E. M. 148
 Botsford, L.W. 319
 Bourque, B.J. 319
 Boxaspen, K. 195
 Boyd, Claude E. 277, 289
 Braathen, J. N. 149
 Bradbury, R.H. 319
 Bright, Kevin J. 345
 Brister, Deborah J. 14, 23, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 60, 68, 69, 75, 101, 121, 130
 Britt, Deborah C. 265
 Bromage, Niall R. 292
 Brooke, Simon 174
 Browdy, C.L. 196
 Brown, J.J. 254
 Brown, Lester R. 220
 Brugere, C. 337
 Buck, Homer 273
 Budig, T.W. 43
 Bueno, P. 329
 Bull, Carolee T. 394
 Bullis, Robert A. 196, 197
 Bunting, S.W. 281
 Burke, William T. 373
 Burros, Marian 17
 CAB International 404
 Cabbage Hill Farm 239
 Cacaud, P. 354
 Carlberg, J.M. 235
 Chaffee, Chet 142
 Chao, Gloria 353
 Chapple, Irene 122
 Charles, E. 178
 Chen, Y.S. 162
 Cherry, Drew 139, 184
 Chircop, A. 148
 Chiu Liao, I. 162
 Cho, G. K. 156
 Clare Island Seafarm 210
 Clay, Jason 300, 325
 Cochrane, Kevern 141, 177
 Cohen, Stefanie 208
 Coleman, R. 357
 Cooke, R. 319
 Coons, Ken 59
 Costa-Pierce, Barry A. 299
 Creswell, R. LeRoy 249, 333
 Cromartie, John 152
 Cyanotech 67
 Dallimore, John 27
 Davenport, John 290
 Davis, D.A. 196
 Deere, Carolyn 140, 177
 Defrancesco, Eli 108

(Continued on page 38)

(Continued from page 37)

- Delgado, Christopher L. 155, 175
 Dell'Agnello, Maurizio 278
 Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry. Quarantine and Export Services. Organic Produce Export Committee 106
 Dimitri, Carolyn 181
 Ding, Zhuhong 4
 DiPietro, Ben 40, 172
 Diver, Steve 240
 Dixon, B. A. 296
 Dolinski, Mike 41
 Donath, H. 129, 159
 Dosdat, A. 316
 Downey, Robin 47
 Dugger, D. 357
 Easton, M.D.L 328
 Edeson, William R. 368, 374
 El-Hage Scialbba, Nadia 19, 23
 Elliott, Matthew Sterling 321
 Environmental Defense Fund 70, 324
 Environmental Strategies for Aquaculture Symposium 310
 Erlandson, J. 319
 Estes, J.A. 319
 European Commission. Directorate-General for Agriculture 403
 European Commission. Directorate-General for Fisheries 285
 European Commission. Directorate-General for Fisheries. Aquaculture Unit 359
 European Economic Community 110
 European Inland Fisheries Advisory Commission 30, 230
 Federal Coordinating Council for Science Engineering and Technology. Working Group on Quality Assurance in Aquaculture Production 362
 Federal Joint Subcommittee on Aquaculture. Working Group on Quality Assurance in Aquaculture Production 317
 Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP) 301
 Filotrani, Laura-Jane 16
 Fiorillo, John 186
 Fitzsimmons, K.M. 254
 Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Division of Marketing. Aquaculture Market Development Aid Program 294
 Flos, Rosa 333
 Folke, C. 300, 325
 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations 30, 230
 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and World Health Organization (WHO). Codex Alimentarius Commission 398
 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. Committee on Fisheries 225
 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. Fisheries Department 222, 348, 370, 377, 382
 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. Fisheries Industry Division 163, 164, 188
 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. Fishery Resources Division 272
 Forster, J. 322
 Frankic, A. 340
 Franz, Nicole 163, 164
 Fritch, James 273
 Fujii, K. 360
 Garcia-Vargas, M. 305, 306
 Gardiner, P. R. 147
 Garforth, Dave 72
 Gegner, Lance 388
 GESAMP (IMO/FAO/Unesco-IOC/WMO/WHO/IAEA/UN/UNEP Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection) 323, 327, 332
 Gibbs, E. P. J. 179
 Gilbert, Ronnie J. 183
 Girard, Sophie 153
 Gjedrem, T. 192
 Gjerde, B. 192
 Glenn, E.P. 254
 Global Aquaculture Alliance 61
 Goldberg, Cary 221
 Goldberg, Rebecca J. 70, 300, 321, 324, 325
 Gordin, Hillel 267
 Grahl-Nielsen, O. 303
 Grainger, R. 234
 Granger, Pete 99
 Greene, Catherine 181, 189
 Gumy, A. 234
 Hallerman, Eric M. 293
 Handley, S. 169
 Hanson, E. 161
 Hardy, Ronald W. 26, 76, 193, 314, 322
 Harvey, David J. 127, 138, 215
 Hastings, T.S. 280
 Hattam, Caroline 19, 23
 Heath, J.W. 120, 156
 Henriksson, Stig Hakan. 320
 Hepburn, Jimmie 32, 36, 38
 Hernandez, Romualdo E. 369
 Hershner, C. 340
 Hicks, R.L. 133
 Hishamunda, N. 375, 381
 Holland, D. 176
 Holm, J.C. 195
 Holmyard, Nicki 37
 Homziak, J. 357
 Hough, C. 329
 House, J. A. 179
 Houtte, Annick van 369
 Howard M. Johnson and Associates 212
 Howarth, William 365, 369
 Hrusa, Christopher T. 257
 Hughes, T.P. 319
 Hutcheson, Tom 12
 Inglis, Valarie 292
 Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique 311
 Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy 312
 Institute for Marketecology (IMO) 117
 International Council for the Exploration of the Sea 297, 363

(Continued on page 39)

(Continued from page 38)

- International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) 115, 116
 International Fishmeal and Fish Oil Manufacturers Association (IFOMA) 42
 International Organic Accreditation Service 400
 Iowa State University Extension 387
 Ives, Brian H. 3
 Jackson, Jeremy B.C. 319
 Jahncke, Michael L. 330
 Jawson, Michael D. 394
 Ji, Ying Q. 251
 Johnsen, R. I. 303
 Johnson, Howard M. 237
 Johnston, R.J. 129, 159
 Joint Subcommittee on Aquaculture 362
 Jordan, W.C. 316
 Kalo, Joseph J. 355
 Kapuscinski, Anne R. 14, 52, 53, 54, 60, 68, 69, 75, 293
 Karir, Gurpreet 343
 Kautsky, Nils 300, 325
 Kennard, B. 168
 Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture 2
 Kestin, S. C. 151
 Kidwell, S. 319
 Kinnucan, H.W. 137
 Kinnunen, Ronald E. 310
 Kirby, M.X. 319
 Kirschenmann, Fred 60
 Knudson, E.E. 161
 Kocan, K. M. 179
 Konikoff, M. 357
 KRAV Standards Committee 104
 Kremen, Amy 189
 Kuepper, George 388
 Laird, Lance 294
 Lange, C.B. 319
 Lazur, Andrew M. 255, 265
 LeBlanc, C. 148
 Lee, Cheng-Sheng 288
 Lem, Audun 188
 Lenihan, H.S. 319
 Lim, C. 202, 227
 Lin, R.S. 162
 Linder, Harold 28
 Lindsay, Jay 252
 Lockeretz, William 130, 399
 Lockwood, G. S. 20, 165, 166
 Lorenz, Todd 67
 Losordo, Thomas M. 268, 269, 270, 271
 Lubchenco, Jane 300, 325
 Lunestad, B. T. 303
 Lusznjak, D. 328
 Luten, J.B. 180
 Luzar, E. J. 309, 376
 MacDonald, D.D. 161
 Machado, L. 204
 MacMillan, J. R. 283
 Maher, Jay 251
 Mäkinen, Timo. 320
 Mansfield, B. 11, 34
 Manuel-Vez, M. P. 305, 306
 Marcus, Erica 167
 Mariojous, Catherine 153
 Maryland Department of Agriculture 380
 Masser, Michael P. 242, 243, 244, 245, 247, 248, 255, 268, 269, 270, 271, 276
 Mathies, M.C. 198
 Maunder, R. 168
 Mayk, Lauren 136
 McConnell, M. 148
 McCoy II, Henry D. 223, 347
 McCrea, D. 168
 McGinn, Anne Platt 132
 McGladdery, S.E. 329
 McGovern, Dan 15
 McHugh, Dennis J. 253
 McLarney, William O. 264
 McVey, James P. 314, 334
 Meijer, Seit 175
 Mergentime, Ken 390
 Merican, Z. 6
 Midlen, Alex B. 307, 344
 Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan 118
 Molyneaux, Paul 224
 Monfort, M. 143
 Monterey Bay Aquarium 335
 Mooney, Harold 300, 325
 Moore, John Norton 141
 Moreno, C. 305, 306
 Morrhead, Kelly 102
 Morris, J.E. 246
 Moschini, G. 129
 Mosig, John 29
 Mott, Bill 78
 Muir, J.F. 337
 Myers, Ransom 331
 Myrland, O. 137
 Nash, Colin E. 128
 National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia 112
 National Association of State Aquaculture Coordinators 380
 National Organic Aquaculture Working Group 80
 National Organic Standards Board 65, 77, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 97, 397
 National Organic Standards Board. Aquatic Animal Task Force 82
 National Organic Standards Board. Livestock Committee 93
 National Organic Standards Board. Policy Development Committee 81
 National Research Council. Committee on Assessment of Technology and Opportunities for Marine Aquaculture in the United States 226
 National Science Foundation 274
 Naturland e.V. 1, 117, 119
 Naylor, Rosamond L. 282, 300, 321, 325

(Continued on page 40)

(Continued from page 39)

- Nelson, Richard C. 94
 Neori, Amir 267, 275
 Nerrie, B. 206
 New Alchemy Institute 263, 264, 274
 New, Michael 341
 New South Wales Office of Labour Market Adjustment (OLMA).
 Aquaculture Fishing and Related Industries Committee Inc.
 (NOFARIC) 302
 Newhook, A. 120
 Nordquist, Myron H. 141
 Norway Direktoratet for utviklingshjelp 341
 O'Bryen, Patricia J. 288
 O'Neill, Brendan 78, 291
 O'Riordan, B. 182
 Oehlenschlager, J. 180
 Okumoto, S. 204
 Olafsdottir, G. 180
 Olesen, I. 192
 Opsahl-Ferstad, H. G. 191
 Orfila, G. 371
 Organic Farming Research Foundation 386
 Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) 18
 Organic Trade Association 391, 401
 Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association 47
 Pandolfi, J.M. 319
 Paquotte, P. 178
 Parkin, Jeffrey 264
 Peddie, S. 217
 Pelletier, Nathan 45
 Percy, D.R. 375
 Peterman, Randall M. 145
 Peterson, C.H. 319
 Petit, Jean 311
 Pew Oceans Commission 279, 321
 Phillips, Bruce F. 142
 Phillips, M.J. 329
 Pillay, T.V.R. 284
 Pimentel, D. 295
 Popper, Dan M. 267
 Port Focus New Zealand 124
 Powell, Kendall 200
 Primavera, Jurgenne H. 300, 325
 Pruder, G.D. 52
 PT. Alter Trade Indonesia (ATINA) 203
 Pugh, Kristen 51
 Rakocy, James E. 238, 249, 259, 268, 269, 270, 271
 Redding, Theresa A. 307, 344
 Reid, A. 206
 Reinertsen, Helge 341
 Reiser, D.W. 161
 Research Institute for Fisheries. Aquaculture and Irrigation 194
 Riddle, James 48, 54
 Ridler, N.B. 232, 381
 Riepe, Jean 246
 Roberts, Ronald J. 131, 292
 Roe, B. 133
 Roheim, C.A. 185
 Roque, C. 204
 Rosegrant, Mark W. 155, 175
 Rubino, Michael C. 364
 Rudi, H. 191
 Ruello, N. 157
 Rundgren, G. 399
 Ruyter, B. 191
 Ruyter, S. 191
 Rye, M. 192
 Rylander, J. C. 295
 Ryther, John H. 229
 Samocha, T.M. 196
 Sanitech Corporation 102
 Saroglia, M. 316
 Sbc fishace 24
 Scheel, Joan 158
 Schettler, Renee 167, 171
 Schittou, H.R. 277
 Schroeder, Gerald 258
 Scott, P. 134
 Sealock, Dan 246
 SeaWeb Aquaculture Clearinghouse 78, 339, 350, 351, 352
 Segerson, K. 129
 Sexton, R.J. 129
 Shang, Yung C. 125
 Shanks, R. E. 295
 Shell, Eddie W. 298
 Shintani, M. 204
 Shiva, Vandana 343
 Shpigel, Muki 267, 275
 Shultz, R.C. 249
 Sideman, Eric 79, 96
 Skurla, James 251
 Small, A. 39
 Smith, P. 358
 Smith, S.E. 254
 Staniford, D. 35
 Steeby, Jim 250
 Stefanou, S.E. 129
 Steneck, R.S. 319
 Stern, M. 31
 Steward, C.R. 161
 Stewart, J.A. 337
 Stickney, Robert R. 214, 218, 314, 334
 Stokes, A.D. 196
 Stott, A. 217
 Strong, Donald R. 282
 Subasinghe, R.P. 329
 Sutherland, R. M. 170
 Svennevig, Niels 341
 Swann, LaDon 246
 Swiss Import Promotion Programme (SIPPO) 117
 Sylvia, G. 161
 Synergy Company 95

(Continued on page 41)

(Continued from page 40)

- Tabora, P. 204
 Tacon, Albert G. J. 5, 23, 52, 199, 314
 Tanaka, Kunizo 308
 Tegner, M.J. 319
 Teisl, M.F. 133
 Tejada, T. 204
 The Rural Capacity Building Through Organic Agriculture (RCBTOA) Project 126
 The Soil Association 113, 392
 Thiermann, A. B. 179
 Thode Jacobsen, Birthe 402
 Thompson, Robert 4, 25, 120, 156, 162, 198, 204
 Tidwell, J.H. 219
 Tisdell, Clem 150, 326
 Todd, S. 344
 Tomasso, J.R. 286
 Tournay, Bernadette 7, 187
 Tovar, A. 305, 306
 Triplett, Tracy 324
 Troell, Max 300
 Tropical Research and Conservation Centre (TRACC) 213
 Turner, Gary E. 297
 Twenty-eighth Session of the FAO Conference 356
 Tzankova, Zdravka 291
 U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy 336
 U.S. Department of Agriculture 364
 U.S. Department of Agriculture. Agricultural Marketing Service 73
 U. S. Department of Agriculture. Agricultural Marketing Service. National Organic Program 57, 396
 U.S. Department of Agriculture. Agricultural Research Service 201
 U.S. Department of Agriculture. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service 160, 362
 U.S. Department of Agriculture. Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service 209
 U.S. Department of Agriculture. Cooperative State Research Service 346
 U.S. Department of Agriculture. Economic Research Service 181, 189, 216, 241, 384, 385
 U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Agricultural Library. Aquaculture Information Center. 362
 U.S. Department of Agriculture. USDA Study Team on Organic Farming 393
 U.S. Department of the Interior. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Division of Congressional and Legislative Affairs 378
 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 362
 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. National Agriculture Compliance Assistance Center 349
 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Office of Water 256
 U.S. Food and Drug Administration 362
 U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition 379
 U.S. Japan Meeting on Aquaculture. Yoshoku Kenkyujo. Japan. Suisancho. 308
 U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration 364
 U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Coastal Services Center 366, 367
 U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. National Marine Fisheries Service 231
 UK Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Organic Farming and Industrial Crops Division 109
 Ulery, Susan 95
 United Nations. Office of Legal Affairs. Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea 383
 United States Congress 74
 United States Congress. House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries. Subcommittee on Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation and the Environment 228
 United States Congress. Office of Technology Assessment 293
 United States Joint Subcommittee on Aquaculture 236
 van Gorder, Steven 273
 Van Houtte, Anne R. 374
 Vaquedano, J. 204
 Variyam, Jayachandran N. 152
 Veal, C.D. 357
 Viswanathan, K. K. 147
 Von der Geest, E. 328
 Vosseler, D. 134
 Wada, Nikolas 155, 175
 Wallis, Paul 177
 Wang, Guichun 4
 Wang, Xiaorong 4
 Ward, Trevor J. 142
 Warner, R.R. 319
 Warriss, P. D. 151
 Washington Fish Growers Association 99
 Webster, C.D. 202, 227
 Wessells, Cathy R. 129, 146, 159, 176, 177
 White, Kathryn 291
 White, P. 315
 Whole Foods Market 58
 Wijkström, U. 234
 Wild Aquatic Species Working Group 103
 Williams, Susan L. 282
 Willer, Helga 395
 Williams, D. 154
 Williams, J.E. 161
 Williams, Ken 2
 Williams, M. 325
 Willmann, Rolf 141, 177, 329
 Wilson, Charles A. 364
 Wirth, F. F. 309, 376
 Wongso, Suwidji 203
 Woodward, Colin 313
 World Aquaculture Society 190
 Worm, Boris 331
 Wright, S. 168
 Xie, Biao 4
 Young, J. A. 135, 337
 Youngson, A.F. 316
 Yussefi, Minou 395
 Zamora, R. 204
 Zhang, Y. 4
 Zweig, Ronald 342

Subject Index

- accreditation 377
 advertising 137
Aeromonas salmonicida 280
 Africa 67, 354, 375, 381
 agricultural chemicals 362
 agricultural economics 31, 168, 181, 189
 agricultural law 360
 agriculture 34, 54, 322
 agroecology 23
 Alaska 51, 59, 148
 algae 28, 62, 67, 95, 102, 267
 algae culture 105, 275
 alligators 256
 alternative marketing 183
 amino acids 314
 ammonia 275
 ammonium nitrogen 254
Anguilla 227
 Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service 362
 animal diseases 202, 292, 359
 animal drugs 104, 106, 107, 160, 280, 317, 362
 animal health 45, 55, 56, 63, 64, 66, 68, 69, 75, 82, 85, 98, 101, 104, 112, 117, 119, 123, 160, 201, 330
 animal husbandry 71, 115, 123
 animal introduction 297
 animal nutrition 26, 84, 92, 98, 100, 101, 104, 121, 191, 201, 202, 208, 227, 259
 animal production 111, 168
 animal products 370, 371
 animal welfare 26, 27, 35, 45, 54, 55, 56, 63, 64, 66, 75, 85, 98, 100, 104, 106, 107, 111, 133, 201
 antibiotics 45, 68, 160, 280, 283, 296, 358
 aquacultural and fisheries economics 11, 22, 40, 108, 125, 127, 132, 138, 150, 153, 163, 164, 168, 172, 175, 188, 215, 220, 222, 224, 225, 234, 235, 237, 255, 256, 342, 345, 375, 381
 aquacultural engineering 257
 aquaculture 54, 82, 107, 115, 127, 132, 138, 154, 155, 160, 165, 170, 175, 176, 190, 193, 200, 201, 205, 209, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 223, 227, 232, 234, 236, 238, 241, 246, 257, 258, 262, 264, 267, 272, 273, 274, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 313, 314, 315, 317, 318, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 330, 332, 333, 337, 338, 339, 340, 342, 343, 344, 347, 348, 349, 354, 356, 357, 360, 362, 363, 365, 368, 369, 371, 374, 375, 376
 aquaculture administration 381
 aquaculture development 22, 132, 155, 161, 175, 191, 224, 230, 234, 249, 302, 327, 329, 345
 aquaculture effluents 238, 313, 349
 aquaculture industry 5, 9, 12, 22, 125, 126, 127, 128, 138, 188, 214, 215, 222, 224, 235, 253, 256, 257, 285, 287, 289, 309, 311, 312, 321, 323, 345, 346, 352, 364, 380, 381
 aquaculture management 28, 56, 64, 104, 107, 117, 119, 123, 128, 187, 198, 203, 234, 245, 271, 314, 315, 327, 334, 338, 340, 341, 343
 aquaculture products 30, 135, 150, 178, 183, 201, 206, 211, 230
 aquaculture regulations 30, 192, 235, 317, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 358, 359, 366, 367, 372, 380
 aquaculture systems 9, 46, 55, 62, 104, 113, 117, 119, 121, 201, 206, 239, 240, 250, 251, 252, 255, 256, 265, 268, 269, 270, 271, 276
 aquaculture techniques 3, 16, 32, 206, 249, 272
 aquaponics 239, 240, 259, 266, 339
 aquarium culture 134
 aquatic animals 11, 12, 14, 18, 34, 49, 52, 53, 56, 63, 64, 65, 66, 75, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 84, 85, 86, 88, 91, 96, 98, 100, 160, 168, 227, 306, 360, 368, 375
 aquatic ecology 60, 298
 aquatic organisms 11, 85, 89, 227, 306
 aquatic plants 87, 91, 96, 105, 160, 270
 aquatic produce 11, 168
 artificial feeding 199
 artisanal fisheries 354
 Asia 360, 368
 Atlantic herring 148
 Atlantic mackerel 148
 Atlantic salmon 131, 195, 227
Atriplex barclayana 254
 Australia 29, 105, 106, 112, 148, 302, 351
Azolla filiculoides 344
 bacteria 280, 292, 296, 379
 bacterial diseases 280, 283, 292, 358
 baitfish 256
 Bangladesh 154
 baseline studies 206
 bass 227, 252, 256
 behavior modification 137
 best management practices 288
 bioaccumulation 45, 107, 113, 208, 328, 379
 biological filtration 254, 259, 267, 268, 273, 275
 biological products 362
 biomass production 275
 books 115, 180
 botanical treatment systems 344
 brackish water 165
 breeding 55, 64, 68, 117, 119, 123, 192
 British Columbia 45, 120, 126, 156
 brood stocks 192
 byproducts 314
 cages 46, 61, 70, 99, 119, 195, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 256, 276, 313
 California 34
 Canada 41, 313, 351, 353
 Caribbean 249

(Continued on page 43)

(Continued from page 42)

- carnivores 84, 92, 123, 197, 322, 331
 carp 1, 119, 123, 163, 227, 273
 case studies 185, 343, 375
 catfish 138, 183, 215, 220, 250, 256, 273
 Cerastoderma edule 148
 certification 12, 15, 59, 134, 145, 146, 153, 154, 178, 185, 288, 370, 377, 382
 Chanos chanos 227
 chemical control 283
 chemical properties 272, 305
 Chile 351
 China 220
 Chrysophrys auratus 227, 306
 Chrysophrys major 227
 climate change 319
 Clupea harengus 148
 coastal areas 232, 319, 340, 366, 367
 coastal open water based systems 267
 coastal zone management 318, 355, 367
 code of practice 288, 315
 codes of conduct 288
 color additives 362
 comfrey 28
 commodity consumption projections 152
 conflict 232
 Congresses 13, 32, 52, 53, 75, 190, 205, 225, 233, 278, 287, 308, 310, 333, 341, 346, 377
 constructed wetlands 344
 construction 242, 250, 255, 357
 consumer attitudes 17, 40, 129, 130, 135, 137, 158, 178, 289
 consumer preferences 129, 133, 136, 137, 146, 153, 159, 176, 184, 197, 237, 315, 335
 consumer protection 18, 59, 141, 142, 187
 consumer surveys 129, 152, 159
 continuous cropping 267
 cost benefit analysis 232
 costs 170, 235, 245, 295, 386, 391, 392
 crabs 202
 cranberries 252
 crayfish 202, 256
 crop production 115, 387
 culture tanks 206
 Cyprinus 119
 data reduction 319
 decision making 129, 337
 demography 129, 136, 153, 158, 237
 design 28, 255, 265, 268, 269, 270, 357
 developing countries 147, 149
 diadromous fishes 227
 Dicentrarchus labrax 227
 diets 68, 78, 84, 97, 101, 105, 106, 152, 165, 193, 196, 199, 206, 208, 210
 disease control 195, 217, 255, 259, 270, 271, 296, 358, 379
 disease resistance 192, 202, 283
 disease transmission 360
 dissolved gas 259, 269, 271, 273
 domestication 192
 drinking water 280
 drug resistance 280, 296, 358
 duckweed 206
 ecolabelling 14, 18, 130, 139, 140, 141, 142, 145, 148, 149, 159, 177, 182, 185, 291, 312, 377, 382
 ecological management 23, 45, 145, 234, 291, 331
 ecology 60, 143, 144, 232, 295
 economic analysis 22, 45, 129, 133, 135, 136, 139, 145, 181, 221, 237, 245, 256, 326, 337, 357
 economic development 326, 337, 342
 economic impact 19, 23, 232, 340, 371
 economics 125, 127, 138, 161, 170, 176, 179, 215, 216, 217, 219, 228, 241, 255, 267, 299, 309, 329, 368, 373, 384, 385, 386, 387, 391, 392, 395
 ecosystem management 161, 298
 ecosystems 86, 229, 281, 340
 Ecuador 32, 33, 211, 283
 effluents 75, 99, 254, 275, 277, 288
 Elodea nuttallii 344
 energy 295
 England 34, 146, 148
 environmental aspects 19, 23, 35, 36, 45, 62, 68, 86, 94, 104, 160, 198, 203, 213, 221, 225, 278, 279, 282, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 294, 297, 299, 301, 302, 304, 307, 308, 311, 314, 318, 320, 321, 323, 324, 332, 333, 334, 338, 341, 343, 346, 352, 359
 environmental impact 4, 5, 27, 44, 70, 132, 154, 175, 219, 232, 280, 281, 289, 300, 301, 305, 306, 313, 315, 319, 323, 325, 326, 330, 337, 340, 368, 382
 environmental management 33, 277, 307, 309, 336, 344
 environmental protection 134, 140, 146, 185, 263, 277, 281, 288, 289, 315, 326, 335, 336, 340, 367, 381
 Environmental Protection Agency 317, 349, 362
 equipment 265, 268
 ethics 295, 315
 Europe 1, 6, 15, 21, 31, 34, 72, 108, 110, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 135, 167, 168, 186, 187, 205, 222, 230, 285, 301, 306, 351, 358, 359, 403
 eutrophication 321
 evapotranspiration 254
 excretion 275
 externalities 232
 farmer's markets 189
 fatty acids 191
 feed composition 6, 37, 71, 84, 97, 104, 165, 187, 191, 193, 199, 200, 322, 328
 feeds 6, 7, 9, 14, 29, 37, 45, 46, 55, 56, 61, 64, 66, 75, 76, 82, 85, 87, 92, 93, 96, 98, 99, 100, 104, 107, 111, 112, 113, 117, 119, 121, 123, 196, 197, 207, 223, 227, 244, 255, 271, 273, 314, 315, 322, 328, 362
 fingerlings 2
 fish 11, 166, 180, 219, 245, 292, 294, 295, 306, 346, 370, 371, 377

(Continued on page 44)

(Continued from page 43)

- fish culture 1, 2, 11, 43, 68, 76, 82, 105, 107, 111, 112, 113, 114, 131, 151, 161, 166, 167, 168, 170, 174, 176, 192, 199, 200, 202, 206, 213, 233, 238, 242, 243, 244, 245, 247, 248, 249, 254, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 264, 266, 267, 271, 272, 274, 275, 280, 288, 294, 298, 320, 348, 356, 363, 375
- fish diseases 202, 217, 271, 319, 358
- fish meal 5, 20, 25, 70, 71, 84, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 96, 97, 99, 119, 121, 191, 200, 207, 219, 223, 314, 322
- fish oils 20, 70, 92, 119, 191, 193, 200, 207
- fish products 87, 88, 89, 97, 137, 377
- fish stress 45, 104, 106, 107, 243, 244, 271
- fisheries 11, 22, 43, 92, 97, 99, 140, 147, 161, 168, 185, 219, 229, 232, 295, 319, 348, 354, 355, 361, 370, 373, 374, 377, 381
- fishery industry 13, 90, 142, 149, 182, 185, 212, 223, 256, 356, 363
- fishery management 141, 145, 146, 147, 148, 161, 177, 185, 231, 234, 279, 295, 331, 348, 354, 356, 361, 363, 377, 381
- fishery policy 279, 348, 354, 359, 366, 367, 381
- fishery products 59, 74, 82, 92, 103, 146, 147, 148, 149, 155, 167, 175, 182, 370, 371
- fishery resources 11, 12, 14, 47, 48, 51, 54, 58, 75, 84, 94, 97, 98, 121, 148, 185, 188, 193, 231, 234, 300, 312, 331, 354
- fishing rights 354, 371
- Florida 294
- flounder 227
- fodder crops 254
- food additives 45, 104, 107, 115, 253, 359
- Food and Drug Administration 317, 349, 362, 379
- food chain 43
- food commodity transition database 152
- food consumption 129, 152, 155, 175
- food economics 11, 136, 158, 168, 178
- food poisoning 280, 332, 379
- food processing 18, 105, 107, 112, 115, 117, 119, 123, 168, 359
- food production 34, 253, 270, 295
- food quality 4, 131, 140, 151, 154, 159, 185, 315, 379, 386, 392
- food safety 45, 280, 332, 379, 386, 392
- food security 19, 23, 379
- foods 178, 382
- France 7, 10, 178, 187, 311
- freshwater aquaculture 30, 199, 230, 305
- freshwater fish 119, 165, 194, 227, 256, 272, 280, 344
- fuel oils 295
- Gadus morhua 146
- GATT 179
- genetics 14, 45, 64, 68, 75, 97, 106, 191, 192, 201, 312, 316
- Germany 114, 139
- giant river prawn 154
- giant tiger prawn 154
- government institutions 65, 78, 83, 256, 289, 351, 357, 366, 376
- government policy 15, 16, 20, 58, 61, 73, 77, 80, 81, 86, 100, 150, 155, 165, 175, 198, 222, 226, 228, 234, 279, 316, 321, 336, 345, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 359, 364, 366, 367, 379, 381, 390, 401, 402, 403, 404
- Gracilaria conferta algae 275
- growth rate 192, 244, 254, 275
- guidelines 288, 377, 379
- Guinea 354
- halibut 227
- Haliotis discus 275
- halophytes 254
- handling 115, 154, 244
- harvesting 27, 105, 112, 119, 123, 203, 245
- health knowledge 152
- history 113, 132, 173, 213, 214, 219, 256, 301, 336, 390, 396, 403
- human diseases 283
- human ecology 263
- human nutrition 132, 152, 386, 391, 392
- hydraulic structures 44, 272
- hydroponics 239, 240, 259, 266, 270
- Ictalurus punctatus 11, 227
- India 343
- Indonesia 32, 203
- inland fisheries 257, 272
- integrated aquaculture 194, 258, 259, 266, 267, 270, 274, 275, 291, 339
- integrated coastal management 340
- intensive culture 194, 220, 258, 267, 275, 281, 322
- international agreements 140, 141, 147, 316, 382, 383
- international comparisons 22, 32, 159, 234, 395, 399, 402, 404
- international law 118, 141, 350, 351, 353, 361, 383
- international organizations 5, 12, 13, 14, 15, 25, 32, 33, 36, 47, 52, 53, 68, 72, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 121, 122, 123, 163, 164, 171, 172, 173, 174, 185, 186, 188, 253, 327, 356, 363, 398, 399, 400
- international relations 141, 336, 354, 382
- international trade 11, 15, 23, 140, 141, 178, 222, 342
- introduced species 45, 61, 282, 363
- Ireland 1, 72, 198, 210
- irrigation 44, 254, 368
- Italy 108
- Japan 118, 360
- Jasus verreauxi 146
- labelling 11, 12, 115, 129, 133, 140, 141, 143, 144, 153, 159, 178, 180, 185, 359, 370, 377, 382, 387, 398
- land policy 368
- land use 368
- Lates calcarifer 227
- law of the sea 354, 356, 367, 370, 371, 383
- laws and regulations 36, 48, 49, 50, 56, 57, 73, 74, 81, 98, 110, 141, 147, 158, 181, 183, 189, 277, 279, 280, 282, 288, 302, 309, 315, 317, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 383, 389, 391, 396, 397, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404
- legal rights 354, 371
- Lemna 206
- Lepeophtheirus salmonis 195
- Lepomis macrochirus 227
- levees 250, 294
- literature reviews 267, 277, 296, 337
- livestock 12, 44, 54, 60, 63, 66, 71, 82, 85, 88, 89, 90, 91, 96, 97, 98, 100, 101, 138, 168, 181, 189, 220

(Continued on page 45)

(Continued from page 44)

- lobsters 202, 256
 Macrobrachium rosenbergii 154
 Macruronus novaezelandiae 148
 Maine 221
 mangroves 25, 117
 mariculture 119, 226, 228, 235, 256, 267, 312, 313, 314, 316, 320, 321, 334, 345
 marine biology 319
 marine biotechnology 228, 293
 marine environment 7, 25, 227, 229, 279, 305, 319, 336, 366, 367
 marine fish 7, 134, 165, 219, 227, 313, 335, 363
 marine fisheries 148, 235, 279, 300, 316, 336, 345, 379, 382
 marine mineral resources 336, 355
 marine resources conservation 279, 327, 335
 maritime law 279, 336, 366, 367, 373
 market competition 11, 15, 178
 marketing 2, 11, 23, 30, 37, 130, 131, 133, 134, 135, 137, 148, 149, 150, 157, 165, 166, 168, 171, 174, 176, 178, 181, 183, 185, 216, 230, 235, 245, 371, 384
 markets 16, 17, 22, 23, 26, 29, 31, 32, 40, 45, 127, 133, 139, 153, 156, 158, 167, 172, 185, 203, 210, 215, 359, 387, 402
 Massachusetts 208
 meat production 168, 220
 Micropterus salmoides 227
 Minnesota 43
 models 137, 357
 mollusc culture 14, 47, 64, 69, 84, 98, 101, 105, 122, 124, 138, 169, 213, 215, 256, 267, 275, 291, 371
 monitoring 154, 315, 344, 356
 mussels 1, 119, 122, 124, 371
 Nasturtium officinale 344
 natural resource conservation 133, 134, 312, 315, 336, 354, 367
 natural resources 60, 235, 378
 New Jersey 40
 New Zealand 107, 122, 124, 148, 169, 351
 nitrate nitrogen 254, 269, 271, 273
 North America 232, 351
 Norway 351
 nutrient uptake 254
 nutrients 67, 70, 76, 199, 227, 238, 270, 275, 281
 oilseed plants 254
 Oklahoma 2
 Oncorhynchus 146, 148
 Oreochromis 206
 organic aquaculture 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 52, 53, 55, 56, 58, 61, 64, 66, 68, 70, 72, 75, 78, 84, 85, 90, 91, 92, 97, 98, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 111, 112, 113, 114, 117, 119, 120, 121, 123, 124, 126, 130, 131, 135, 156, 162, 163, 164, 169, 171, 172, 173, 174, 186, 187, 188, 196, 197, 198, 203, 204, 206, 207, 210, 211, 291
 organic certification 1, 2, 3, 11, 14, 16, 20, 21, 27, 32, 33, 37, 41, 45, 48, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 67, 74, 75, 81, 86, 92, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 122, 123, 136, 158, 163, 164, 165, 167, 171, 172, 173, 174, 181, 186, 187, 188, 189, 203, 386, 387, 389, 391, 392, 395, 396, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404
 organic foods 11, 13, 16, 17, 31, 115, 136, 157, 158, 166, 168, 181, 184, 389, 390, 398
 organic production 4, 11, 19, 23, 34, 45, 49, 50, 54, 60, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 108, 109, 110, 114, 115, 118, 131, 165, 166, 168, 170, 173, 181, 188, 189, 204, 263, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404
 origin 45, 56, 104, 111, 117, 119
 ornamental fish 134, 138, 215, 256, 280
 overexploitation 43, 70, 193, 229, 231, 331, 335
 overfishing 225, 231, 295, 319, 331
 oysters 169, 371
 Pagrus aurata 227, 275, 305
 Pagrus major 227
 Panulirus cygnus 148
 Paralichthys olivaceus 227
 parasites 45
 pathogens 280, 283, 296, 315, 358, 379
 Penaeus monodon 154
 perch 29, 227
 Peru 15
 pest control 259, 270
 pesticides 317, 362, 391
 phytoplankton 258, 267
 pollution 88, 193, 321
 pollution control 28, 277
 polyculture 262, 273, 291, 340
 ponds 28, 29, 112, 117, 119, 123, 138, 205, 235, 247, 250, 252, 255, 256, 257, 260, 265, 272, 288, 294, 298, 357
 postharvest technology 356
 prawns 154, 202, 203, 280
 predation 45
 problem analysis 243, 247
 property rights 375
 prophylaxis 296
 proteins 26, 71, 87, 88, 91, 92, 96, 196, 199, 200, 207, 314
 public health 27, 44, 88, 132, 154, 179, 206, 221, 280, 283, 317, 328, 330, 332, 336, 359, 379
 purchasing 133, 146, 159
 pyrethrins 195
 quality control 30, 34, 37, 141, 151, 154, 178, 180, 187, 315, 379
 raceways 255, 256
 rainbow trout 227
 rapeseed oil 191
 recirculating systems 194, 238, 249, 251, 256, 259, 265, 266, 268, 269, 270, 271, 273, 291
 recreation 161
 research 22, 40, 181, 189, 190, 194, 201, 209, 228, 229, 251, 252, 273, 336, 356, 359, 394

(Continued on page 46)

(Continued from page 45)

- resource utilization 5, 232, 337
 rural development 23, 232
 Russia 222
Salicornia bigelovii 254
 salinity 254
 salmon 1, 8, 17, 25, 27, 119, 135, 137, 138, 156, 161, 163, 167, 170, 171, 208, 215, 219, 220, 227, 232, 256, 312, 313, 316, 328
 salmon culture 35, 37, 45, 72, 104, 174, 195, 210, 221, 325
Salvelinus alpinus 227
 Scandinavia 320
Sciaenops ocellatus 227
Scomber scombrus 148
 Scotland 351
 sea bass 7, 316
 sea bream 7, 108, 305, 316
 seafoods 11, 15, 31, 58, 74, 84, 97, 129, 130, 143, 144, 151, 153, 159, 162, 184, 185, 186, 212, 235, 237, 313, 332, 335, 379
 seaweed culture 105, 249, 253, 267
Seriola quinqueradiata 227
 shadefish 7
 shellfish 20, 153, 164, 178, 180, 187, 256, 371
 shellfish culture 47, 68, 82, 84, 90, 107, 154, 213, 283, 371
 shrimp 25, 119, 138, 164, 196, 202, 203, 215, 219, 220, 256, 343
 shrimp culture 1, 4, 32, 33, 117, 154, 202, 204, 211, 283, 288, 325, 369
 shrimp fisheries 343
 site selection 64, 100, 247, 250, 272, 357
 small-scale fisheries 233
 sociological aspects 44, 115, 151, 175, 203, 225, 291, 312, 340, 367, 371
 sociology 11, 34
 soil quality 272
 solar energy 274
 solid waste 269, 271
 South America 351
 South East Asia 368
 Spain 305, 306
Sparus aurata 275
Sparus auratus 306
 species selection 235, 255, 259, 273, 276
Spirulina 62, 67, 95, 102
 standards 2, 3, 5, 12, 14, 16, 18, 21, 27, 32, 35, 36, 37, 41, 47, 49, 50, 52, 53, 55, 56, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 109, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 123, 130, 140, 151, 154, 163, 164, 168, 170, 172, 173, 182, 185, 186, 188, 288, 377, 398, 402, 403, 404
 statistics 138, 181, 188, 215, 220, 222, 236, 385, 395
 stock assessment 141, 161, 231
 stocking rate 27, 29, 248, 255, 259, 271, 297
 sturgeons 227
Suaeda esteroa 254
 sustainability 43, 132, 178, 185, 201, 232, 275, 277, 289, 291, 295, 300, 301, 326, 337, 339, 342, 348, 360, 375, 381, 382
 sustainable fisheries 139, 140, 148, 177, 229, 279, 336, 339, 340, 341, 370, 377
 Sweden 104
 Switzerland 111, 123, 184
 Taiwan 162
 territorial waters 355
 Thailand 32
Thunnus maccoyii 227
 tilapia 138, 172, 206, 215, 227, 256, 266, 273
 trade 127, 141, 179, 188, 215, 356
 transgenic fish 321
 trout 1, 10, 38, 39, 119, 138, 163, 173, 187, 256
 turbot 187
Ulva lactuca 275
 United Kingdom 16, 21, 27, 36, 37, 38, 109, 113, 144, 168, 170, 173, 174, 198, 365, 392
 United States 11, 16, 17, 42, 55, 61, 127, 138, 148, 161, 165, 186, 206, 212, 214, 215, 220, 224, 226, 228, 231, 233, 236, 237, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 279, 282, 286, 289, 293, 309, 310, 313, 317, 321, 324, 336, 345, 346, 347, 349, 351, 355, 362, 364, 366, 367, 372, 376, 378, 379, 380, 388, 390, 393
 United States Department of Agriculture 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 61, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 158, 167, 172, 181, 201, 209, 216, 241, 317, 362, 372, 384, 385, 387, 389, 390, 391, 394, 396, 397, 401
 vaccines 217, 317
Vibrio cholerae 283
 Vietnam 11, 15, 368
 Virginia 206
 Wales 34, 148
 Washington 99
 waste disposal 287, 323
 waste management 45, 46, 75, 112, 255, 259, 268, 269, 288, 349
 waste utilization 238, 275
 wastes 238, 315
 wastewater treatment 44, 238, 254, 275, 281, 344, 349
 water management 44, 113, 250, 255, 259, 272, 315
 water pollution 45, 76, 277, 279, 305, 306, 307, 313, 325, 336, 337, 349, 379
 water quality 44, 112, 117, 119, 123, 217, 247, 266, 269, 272, 277, 288, 305, 306, 319, 344, 346, 391
 water quality management 29, 55, 64, 106, 107, 132, 256, 259, 271, 273, 287, 294, 307, 336, 349
 water resources 368
 water reuse 275
 water rights 221, 232, 371
 water treatment 238, 265, 268
 water uptake 254
 water use efficiency 254
 watersheds 161
 waterways 232
 wetlands 344
 World Trade Organization 179
Xiphias gladius 146
 yields 146, 219, 275