



NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE



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## Opinion and Commentary

The Bush Administration's National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2007 holds great promise for securing the future of America's seafood supply. If enacted by Congress, the proposed legislation will allow American business to participate in this \$70 billion global industry while ensuring stringent environmental protections. Commercial ventures would be allowed to operate fish and shellfish farms between three and 200 miles off our coasts in federal ocean waters. This marine area covers an amount of space that is larger than the combined land area of the lower 48 states.

### Aquaculture makes good economic sense

Raising fish and shellfish for food has become a global reality. As other countries have continued to develop aquaculture industries the United States has fallen behind, left to export our technology and investments overseas. With a seafood trade deficit somewhere between \$8-10 billion, the United States relies on imported fish and shellfish to meet current market demand, and that reliance will rise unless we increase our ability to produce seafood at home.

We import over 80 percent of our seafood, and at least half of that is farm-raised. Projections show that, within the next 20 years in this country alone, we will need an additional two million metric tons of seafood per year to meet market demand. Where will this increased seafood production come from? Aquaculture is the answer.

### Aquaculture makes good health sense

The mounting medical research on the benefits of seafood to human health cannot be ignored. Federal health experts advise Americans to eat at least two servings of seafood per week. Seafood is an excellent source of protein, is low in fat and sodium, and contains other vitamins and minerals that are important for good health. A recent study from the Harvard School of Public Health found that even modest consumption of fish reduces risk of coronary death by 36 percent. This is significant, as heart disease is the main cause of death among Americans. We need to promote fish consumption, but first we need to ensure we can meet growing market demand for seafood.

### Aquaculture makes good environmental sense

It will give Americans more control of the environmental conditions under which our seafood is grown. It can be used in hatcheries to restore depleted species of fish and shellfish and boost catches for commercial and sport fishermen. It can complement wild catches to meet the growing demand for seafood. As the nation's oceans agency, NOAA's job is to protect the marine environment while balancing multiple uses. We take this responsibility seriously, and the proposed legislation includes strong environmental provisions. Specifically, the act includes an explicit mandate for the Secretary of Commerce to establish environmental requirements and monitoring procedures. It also calls for aquaculture facilities to abide by all existing water quality laws and other pertinent laws already on the books.

Aquaculture makes good homeland security sense  
It will help us secure and monitor safety of our seafood supply.

Aquaculture makes good people sense  
It can generate jobs and revenues for coastal communities, and offer fishermen additional business opportunity between fishing seasons. It can also provide fresh year-round, reliable product for retailers and consumers.

If this legislation is embraced by Congress and the American people, the Administration will develop a sustainable marine aquaculture program in the United States that balances the needs of fishermen, coastal residents and visitors, seafood consumers, the environment, and the aquaculture industry. Citizens will be encouraged to work closely with us every step of the way to ensure we develop a vibrant new industry of which we can all be proud.

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***Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and  
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