NEWS FROM NOAA
NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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NOAA and USDA Accepting Public Comment on Aquaculture Feeds

NOAA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture are soliciting information and ideas on ways to lessen dependence on fish-based feeds in the aquaculture industry. This comment period is the first step of a broad, year-long program that will include research projects, scientific consultations and a national workshop aimed at developing new and effective ingredients for aqua-feed.

"Forty percent of the seafood consumed in the United States comes from farmed sources, so we have a keen interest in making sure that aquaculture production is efficient and environmentally responsible," said Bill Hogarth, director of NOAA Fisheries Service. "Our program will identify science needs on alternative feeds for aquaculture to guide federal research funding priorities."

Congress is considering legislation to allow NOAA to permit aquaculture operations in federal waters, three to 200 miles off U.S. coasts. If enacted, the National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2007 also would authorize a research and development program for all marine aquaculture, which would advance the movement to find additional feed options.

Producers feed pellets to farm-raised fish and shrimp that are made in part from ground-up herring, menhaden, anchovy, and sardines, so-called industrial fish. These small, bony species provide farmed seafood with important protein, fatty acids and essential vitamins and minerals.

The issue of feed ingredients is a challenge facing the expanding global aquaculture industry because industrial fish are under increasing pressure as a commercial fishery worldwide. The cost of fish meal has risen steeply as farming operations have increased. In 2002, 46 percent of fishmeal went to aquaculture uses, while 22 percent went to poultry and 24 percent went to pigs. The amount of available fish meal and fish oil is not likely to increase, so producers must find other sources of feed protein as the aquaculture industry continues to grow.

In response, industry is turning to other feed ingredients such as algae and soybeans, thus reducing the use of fishmeal and fish oil. Studies are helping scientists to better understand the nutritional requirements of fish to ensure new feeds effectively grow seafood that retains nutritional benefits for humans. NOAA Fisheries Service and USDA's Agricultural Research Service and Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service are interested in making better use of discarded fish parts from fish processing plants for feeds, in addition to using a variety of potential ingredients from agriculture, including plants.

To submit a question, idea, or recommendation on alternative feeds for aquaculture, stakeholders should send an e-mail to: noaa.aquaculture@noaa.gov; send a fax to: 301-713-9108; or, send a letter to: NOAA Aquaculture Program, Alternative Feeds Initiative, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13117, Silver Spring, MD 20910. The deadline for comments is February 29, 2008.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is celebrating 200 years of science and service to the nation. From the establishment of the Survey of the Coast in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson to the formation of the Weather Bureau and the Commission of Fish and Fisheries in the 1870s, much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 70 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

On the Web:
NOAA Aquaculture Program: http://www.aquaculture.noaa.gov
NOAA Fisheries Service: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov

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