



Contact: Christine Patrick
301-713-2370

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 9, 2011

Commerce and NOAA release national aquaculture policies to increase domestic seafood production, create sustainable jobs, and restore marine habitats

The Department of Commerce and NOAA today released national sustainable marine aquaculture policies to meet the growing demand for healthy seafood, to create jobs in coastal communities, and restore vital ecosystems. Foreign aquaculture accounts for about half of the 84 percent of seafood imported by the U.S., contributing to the \$9 billion trade deficit in seafood.

“Our current trade deficit in seafood is approximately \$9 billion,” Commerce Secretary Gary Locke said. “Encouraging and developing the U.S. aquaculture industry will result in economic growth and create jobs at home, support exports to global markets, and spur new innovations in technology to support the industry.”

“Sustainable domestic aquaculture can help us meet the increasing demand for seafood and create jobs in our coastal communities,” said Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. “Our vision is that domestic aquaculture will provide an additional source of healthy seafood to complement wild fisheries, while supporting healthy ecosystems and coastal economies.”

The new aquaculture policies, which reflect the public comments received after draft policies were released on February 9, focus on:

- encouraging and fostering sustainable aquaculture that increases the value of domestic aquaculture production and creates American business, jobs, and trade opportunities;
- making timely management decisions based on the best scientific information available;
- advancing sustainable aquaculture science;
- ensuring aquaculture decisions protect wild species and healthy coastal and ocean ecosystems;
- developing sustainable aquaculture compatible with other uses;
- working with partners domestically and internationally; and,
- promoting a level playing field for U.S. aquaculture businesses engaged in international trade, working to remove foreign trade barriers, and enforcing our rights under U.S. trade agreements.

Along with its new policy, the Department and NOAA announced additional steps in the future to support the development of the aquaculture industry through:

- Developing a National Shellfish Initiative in partnership with the shellfish industry to increase commercial production of shellfish, which would create jobs, provide locally-produced food, restore shellfish populations and habitats, and improve water quality.
- Implementing the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Plan for Aquaculture, which includes the regulatory infrastructure needed for offshore aquaculture development in the Gulf.

The domestic aquaculture industry (both freshwater and marine) currently supplies about five percent of the seafood consumed in the U.S. The cultivation of shellfish, such as oysters, clams, and mussels, comprises about two-thirds of U.S. marine aquaculture production. Salmon and shrimp aquaculture contribute about 25 percent and 10 percent, respectively. Current production takes place mainly on land, in ponds, and in states' coastal waters.

“This new focus on helping us develop and expand sustainable aquaculture is welcomed,” said Bill Dewey, a shellfish biologist and Shelton, Wash.-based clam farmer of more than 27 years. “When done right, aquaculture can improve the environment, provide jobs and reclaim American dollars that are being spent on imported aquaculture products.”

The Commerce and NOAA policies build on priorities of President Obama’s National Ocean Policy, including the emphasis on protecting, maintaining and restoring healthy and diverse ecosystems; supporting sustainable uses of the ocean; and increasing scientific understanding and applying that knowledge to make better decisions.

NOAA’s mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth’s environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Visit us at <http://www.noaa.gov> or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/usnoaagov>.