

Global Aquaculture Alliance

I am writing to express my support for Cooke Aquaculture's plans to farm sterile steelhead trout in Washington state. As president and founder of the Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA), an international nonprofit trade association established in 1997 to act as a voice for responsible aquaculture, I've witnessed first-hand the benefits of aquaculture done responsibly.

The work of GAA and its members aligns 15 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) identified by the United Nations and adopted by all 193 member states, including the United States, in 2015. The SDGs act as blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all by 2030.

By the year 2050, world population is expected to reach 9.8 billion and food demand to increase by 50 percent. Global food production systems are one of the largest drivers of climate change as well as a major cause of biodiversity loss and environmental degradation. They cannot be scaled to meet future demand without exacerbating environmental issues. In addition, the mix of foods must change to favor those that are healthier for people to reduce the epidemic of obesity and diet-related, chronic, non-communicable diseases.

The prestigious EAT Lancet Commission evaluated the health benefits and environmental costs of various food groups (Willett et al., 2019). It identified critical planetary boundaries that global food production should stay within "to decrease the risk of irreversible and potentially catastrophic shifts in the Earth system." To stay within these limits requires a shift toward largely plant-based dietary patterns, a reduction in beef, poultry, pork and eggs, and an increase in seafood. This is projected to result in major environmental and health benefits including prevention of 11 million deaths per year (19 percent to 24 percent of total deaths among adults). Aquaculture production is highly resource efficient with lower feed conversion rates than chickens, pigs and cows. In short, food production will be a defining issue of the 21st century, and aquaculture has a critical role to play.

The Global Aquaculture Alliance recognizes Cooke Aquaculture as a leader in responsible production practices. Glen Cooke was a keynote speaker at the Global Outlook for Aquaculture Leadership (GOAL) conference in Chennai, India, in October 2019, where he inspired participants to strive for a sustainable future. Michael Szemerda of Cooke Aquaculture served on the Salmon Farming Technical Committee that developed the Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP) certification standards for salmon farms.

Cooke Aquaculture submitted its salmon farms to audits by independent, third-party certification bodies beginning in June 2011. By March 2015, Cooke Aquaculture had achieved four-star BAP status, one of only three salmon-farming companies in the world to do so at the time. Four-star BAP status is the highest achievement in the BAP program, representing that a combination of a company's processing plants, farms, hatcheries and feed mills are BAP certified. BAP is the world's most comprehensive aquaculture certification program, with standards encompassing environmental responsibility, social accountability, animal health and welfare, and food safety. Processing plants, farms, hatcheries and feed mills must demonstrate 100 percent compliance to

these standards in an annual audit to attain BAP certification, and Cooke has done so for the majority of its facilities.

Cooke Aquaculture has also made strides in greatly reducing the use of antibiotics, and GAA audited several of its salmon hatcheries and farms last year to verify that no antibiotics were used throughout the entire life cycle of those fish. This has not yet been achieved for all salmon produced by Cooke Aquaculture, but they are certainly a leader in responsible use of therapeutants.

It is unfortunate that the Cooke Aquaculture salmon farm in Washington suffered damage and fish escapes shortly after it was acquired and before the facility could undergo planned renovations. The renovated facilities coupled with use of sterile steelhead trout are a responsible solution that effectively deals with the issue while preserving jobs and contributing a healthful food to the community.

Some players in the global seafood arena have gone above and beyond the call of organizations like the United Nations, and Cooke Aquaculture is such a player. I strongly support Cooke Aquaculture's plans to farm steelhead trout in Washington state.

Sincerely,
George Chamberlain
President
Global Aquaculture Alliance



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