

AQUACULTURE ACT ANNOUNCEMENT – SEACHOICE  
For immediate release

VANCOUVER & HALIFAX: SeaChoice welcomes the news today from Fisheries Minister Wilkinson that his Department will begin to engage stakeholders on a new regulatory regime for salmon farming and will fund a study of closed containment aquaculture. The partnership cautions that there is substantial work to be done to create the “certainty” that the Minister indicates he is seeking to enable the industry to grow. Not the least of the items to be addressed are ensuring the safety of wild salmon populations and reconciling the concerns of First Nations about operations in their territories.

“We have been calling on the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to fully implement the precautionary principle and to provide greater transparency about the use of public waters by this industry,” said John Werring, SeaChoice representative from the David Suzuki Foundation. “We expect any new legislative scheme to place the welfare of wild fish first in the consideration of fisheries managers, and to ensure that monitoring and evaluation of impacts on wild fish act as effective triggers for management action on the farms.”

SeaChoice welcomes the news that the federal and provincial governments will co-operate to study the closed containment industry but pointed out that there have been dozens of studies done over the years; and that industry itself has moved on to building fully integrated, egg-to-market facilities on land in China, Denmark, Dubai, France, Norway, Poland, Scotland, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland and the US—to mention only the facilities that have been publicly announced. At last count, 294,000 MT of land-based production is under way. By comparison, Canada currently produces a total 120,000 MT from the open-net pens on both coasts.

“We need to move quickly on a legislative and regulatory framework that is broad enough to enable and incent a transition to land-based aquaculture,” said Karen Wristen, Living Oceans’ representative to SeaChoice. “If the salmon aquaculture industry is to grow and increase its markets, this is where it’s going to have to go.”

A new Aquaculture Act should properly price the ecosystem services that open-net pen aquaculture takes from the ocean. While this is an area of shared responsibility with the provinces, it is clear that issues such as degradation of water and sea-floor, mortality of juvenile wild fish, bycatch and consumption of wild fish by farmed fish aren’t factored in to the cost of aquaculture operational licensing or provincial tenures. “This is one way that the new Act could begin to incent the transition to a more sustainable, land-based form of aquaculture,” said Shannon Arnold, SeaChoice representative from the Ecology Action Centre. “Appropriate and escalating licensing fees can be used to spur investment in cleaner technology.”

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**SeaChoice:**

SeaChoice is a collaboration of three internationally recognized organizations — the David Suzuki Foundation, Ecology Action Centre and Living Oceans Society — that use their broad, national expertise to find solutions for healthy oceans. The partnership is a science-based, solutions-focused influencer, advocate and watchdog leading the next evolution of seafood sustainability in Canada. SeaChoice is a member organization of the Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions, and works with consumers, retailers, suppliers, government and producers to accomplish its objectives.

**Backgrounder:**

Government of Canada news release (December 10):  
[Release](#) / [Backgrounder](#)

