



## **SALMON FARMERS RESPOND TO RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE'S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON FINFISH AQUACULTURE (MAACFA)**

April 5, 2018

CAMPBELL RIVER B.C. - The BC Salmon Farmers Association agrees with many of the recommendations in the B.C MAACFA report released today, and looks forward to working with all levels of government, coastal communities, and First Nations to draw upon the report to continue evolving B.C.'s \$1.5-billion salmon aquaculture industry. While the Council of diverse stakeholders did not find consensus on the risks of the potential impacts associated with salmon aquaculture in B.C., it was able to agree on the principles of six key recommendations.

One key passage from the report's introduction is worth highlighting: "Despite the differences within MAACFA on the risk that farms pose, members share a common vision on the importance of sustaining wild Pacific salmon, the need for salmon farm practices to better align with this primary goal, and the importance for government and the industry to build greater trust among British Columbians." BC salmon farmers agree with that statement.

"With an average of 70 per cent of salmon harvested in B.C. and more than half of the fish harvested globally coming from farms, the industry plays a key role in both meeting our demand for healthy fish to eat and in reducing the strain on wild fish stocks from over-fishing. While any farming, on land or water, has an environmental impact it can be done responsibly and with wild stocks top-of-mind. That is our goal," said Rocky Boschman, BCSFA board member. The association participated on the Council along with academics, environmental groups, and First Nations. "The report recognizes the advancements salmon farmers have made over the past 30 years in fish health, environmental protection, and in developing relations with Indigenous governments, while also making recommendations for advancing that work in the coming years. However, the report also contains some recommended actions that we agree within principle but will be unworkable in practice without further clarification. We look forward to collaborating with government and First Nations to address those important topics."

In particular, while salmon farmers agree collaborating with local First Nations when working on Crown land is crucial and have a long track record of doing so, as currently drafted the recommendation that would require Crown tenure holders to acquire First Nation agreements as a condition of continuing operations at existing business sites is unclear and would be unworkable in practice. The Association cannot support that recommendation as written, but would welcome the opportunity to work with other stakeholders and government to clarify it.

For the last 10 years, all new site applications from BCSFA members to provincial or federal regulators have had prior support of the Indigenous government whose traditional territory the operation would be located in. Making a recommendation on consultation over existing sites sits outside the mandate of this Council, which was charged in 2016 with offering the government advice on issuing new tenures – not existing sites. Regardless, the recommendation was made and thus needs addressing.

Some salmon farms have been in place for 30 years, and are key employers in their communities. All salmon farmers who hold existing licenses have reached out to all local First Nations and in most cases secured agreements on how to work together through open dialogues. Indeed, B.C. salmon farmers have agreements with 20 First Nations and many of the 6,600 jobs supported by the province's salmon farms are held by people of First Nations heritage. Salmon farms do business with numerous First Nations businesses.

However, in a handful of cases a local community has refused to even speak with local farmers, so dialogue and reaching an agreement has not been possible. Clarity about the process for consultation on existing sites and the need for all parties to productively sit at the table together are necessary for this recommendation to be effective in practice.

The BCSFA has written to the provincial government offering to consult further on this and other recommendations.

About the BC Salmon Farmers Association:

Farm-raised salmon is B.C.'s highest valued seafood product, the province's top agricultural export, and generates over \$1.5-billion towards the B.C. economy, resulting in over 6,600 jobs.

The BC Salmon Farmers Association represents 52 businesses and organizations throughout the value chain of finfish aquaculture in B.C. Our members account for over 95% of the annual provincial harvest of farm-raised salmon, 100% of the salmon feed produced in B.C., and most of the service and suppliers involved in ensuring that over \$700-million (2016 value) of salmon raised in B.C. gets to domestic and global markets.

For more information visit [BCSalmonFarmers.ca](http://BCSalmonFarmers.ca)

**Media contact:**

Shawn Hall

[shawn@apogeepr.ca](mailto:shawn@apogeepr.ca)

604-619-7913