



MAINE AQUACULTURE ASSOCIATION

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Meeting with Presidential Transition Team Members

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U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, DC

Respectfully submitted by Sebastian M. Belle, Executive Director

Good Morning and thank you for the opportunity to address you this morning.

I am handing out a briefing package of materials as a background to my comments this morning. These are difficult and challenging times. Challenges present opportunities for change.

Our children are about to inherit a world and ecosystem that has been seriously damaged.

Our actions can still make a change.

Business as usual is not good enough.

The decisions we make in next 8-10 years will radically impact our children's future.

One area we have to make some critical decisions about is food production.

Where will our food come from?

From far away places with little or no environmental, labor, or food safety monitoring and oversight or from local communities in which food production is part of community and under high environmental, food safety and labor standards?

How will food prices, availability and production methods impact public health, environmental integrity and community socio-economics?

In the marine environment, the picture is not pretty.

With several notable exceptions, commercial fisheries and the stocks they rely on are in crisis.

In many cases, they have virtually collapsed.

Harvest capacity far exceeds stock capacity.

Fishing fleets are over capitalized and tied up.

Processing plants are empty or under utilized.

Working waterfronts are dying and thousands of fishing families are unemployed with little hope of returning to the fishery.



Traditional coastal communities with long histories of a year round close connection to the ocean and its ecosystems are becoming upscale residential communities. Young people are either moving away or working as seasonal service employees.

Marine aquaculture holds great promise for helping these communities maintain their maritime heritage, provide year round high quality jobs, grow healthy food locally, decrease environmental impacts and improve national food security.

Technical and environmental challenges are there but are soluble!

No other country in the world is better technically positioned to develop innovative sustainable farming methods.

Marine aquaculture is going to happen. The demand and need is overwhelming.

Marine aquaculture is already happening – over 45% of the world’s seafood currently comes from aquaculture.

Our choice is will we lead the way in development of sustainable methods or buy food from far away places, produced in ways that damage the environment and land communities.

If we are to lead the way, we must provide conditions that encourage domestic investment and incentives for sustainable production methods.

To date, everything we have done has driven investment offshore

- increasing environmental impact
- decreasing food security
- increasing national deficit

If it is grown here, we will control where it is grown, how it is grown, any potential impacts and what’s in it.

If it is grown elsewhere, we control none of these.

The following actions would help develop domestic marine aquaculture in a sustainable and competitive manner.

Critical Needs for Domestic Marine Aquaculture Development.

- Streamlined, “one stop shop” permitting and leasing system.
- Pre-permitted aquaculture development zones.
- Simple and effective environmental monitoring program.



- Investment incentives designed to stimulate development of a National Blue Revolution and transition to Blue-Green economy.
- Commercial scale demonstration farms focused on the development and demonstration of innovative, sustainable and commercially competitive farming methods.
- Targeted infrastructure investments designed to support development of critical mass in the aquaculture cluster.
- Endowment of a revolving aquaculture development loan fund designed to assist existing commercial fishermen to transition to marine aquaculture.
- Investment in marine aquaculture research infrastructure and training facilities.
- Targeted research in aquatic animal health, environmental carrying capacity, breeding and domestication programs and sustainable production methods.

In closing, I would like to refer the Transition Team to the following resources for additional information.

NOAA 10-Year Plan for Marine Aquaculture, October 2007 <http://www.aquaculture.noaa.gov>

Offshore Aquaculture in the United States: Economic Considerations, Implications, and Opportunities 2008 <http://www.aquaculture.noaa.gov>

Overcoming Technical Barriers to the Sustainable Development of Competitive Marine Aquaculture in the United States. Proceedings of a Workshop on Enhancing Competitiveness of Sustainable Marine Aquaculture in the United States; Addressing Measurement Barriers to Technical Innovation, February 2008, Orlando, Florida. National Institute of Standards and Technology and National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration