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AQUACULTURE BACKGROUNDER

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ASA Position:

ASA supports implementation of marine aquaculture policies that will lead to development of a domestic offshore aquaculture industry. With foreign aquaculture now accounting for about half of the 91 percent of seafood imported by the United States, development of a domestic industry will create U.S. jobs and meet growing demand for a safe and sustainable source of seafood. According to the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the world is now eating more farmed fish than wild catches.

ASA supports the Gulf Fisheries Management Plan released by NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) in 2016, which will establish a regional permitting process to manage the development of an environmentally sound and economically sustainable aquaculture industry in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

Background:

Aquaculture is the fastest growing form of food production in the world, and most of this growth is offshore and overseas. Seafood imports are the second biggest contributor to the U.S. trade deficit – NOAA puts the U.S. trade deficit for seafood at [\\$14 billion](#). That number grows annually and is second only to oil. Major aquaculture-exporting nations include China, India, and Vietnam. U.S. aquaculture (both freshwater and marine) supplies about 5 percent of the U.S. seafood supply, and U.S. marine aquaculture supplies less than 1.5 percent.

ASA supports research on plant-based feeds to position soy as the economically viable and environmentally friendlier alternative to fish meal and fish oil. Since 1992, soybean farmers have funded market development activities for soy-based aquaculture diets, primarily in China. This program has increased demand for soybean meal for farm-raised fish from almost zero to an estimated 8 million metric tons annually, contributing to China's emergence as the largest market for U.S. soybean exports and soy's role as the largest U.S. agricultural export.

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Plan for Aquaculture

The long-awaited final rule implementing the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Plan for Aquaculture was published in January 2016. ASA commends this effort. The rule creates the regulatory infrastructure needed for offshore aquaculture development in the Gulf, including the issuance of permits for an initial period of 10 years for growing species such as red drum, cobia, and almaco jack in federal waters in the Gulf. ASA supports this plan as the first step to realizing aquaculture development and growth in Federal waters.