

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT AQUACULTURE

Brought to you by the Ontario Animal Health Network

Seafood has become an increasingly important part of our diets and this growing demand threatens to destabilize the fishing industry. Aquaculture, the fastest growing agriculture sector in the world, can help meet the growing demand for protein and can help relieve pressure on wild fish populations. Globally, aquaculture now accounts for nearly 50% of food fish.

In Ontario, trout, tilapia, shrimp, bass, perch, barramundi and walleye are farmed in land-based tanks, open water net-pens and aquaponics facilities. These farms are able to supply approximately 5,000 tonnes of farmed seafood per year but the demand far exceeds the supply.



Myth
1

Farmed seafood is not safe to eat

Farmed seafood is both safe and healthy. Canada's Food Guide recommends eating at least two servings of seafood each week, including farmed seafood.

FACT

Aquaculture farmers follow the same food safety guidelines as other food producers. Animals are inspected prior to going to the market. Both the diets and environments of farmed seafood are monitored closely to ensure healthy animals.

Myth
2

Aquaculture farming causes disease in wild fish

Farmed



Pathogens and disease are a reality in animal production.

On fish farms, disease is kept at bay by good nutrition, vaccination, good breeding stock, biosecurity and husbandry practices that minimize stress in the fish.

Aquatic animal health practices include measures to reduce risks of disease. The use of antibiotics is a last resort.

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Wild



In Ontario, many wild fish are hatched in aquaculture facilities and released into the wild.

Pathogen transfer, particularly bacteria and viruses, from cultured fish to wild fish that results in disease and mortality is a rare event.

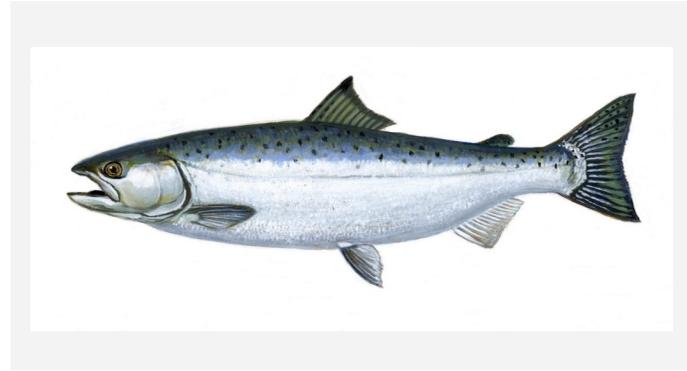
More often, wild fish bring pathogens in the environment to farmed fish.



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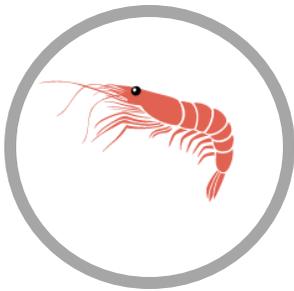
Myth 3 Farmed seafood is full of contaminants

No farmed fish are on any “avoid” list due to mercury or other pollutants. In general, common popular seafood in Canada are relatively low in mercury. Formulated feed ingredients used in aquaculture are regularly monitored to avoid possible contamination.



FACT Antibiotic use in salmon and trout aquaculture is rare due to improved husbandry practices and the development of vaccines for major diseases of concern.

Myth 4 Farmed seafood is full of additives



Carotenoids, naturally found in shrimp and krill, give salmon and trout flesh its distinctive pink colour



Farmed salmon and trout are supplemented with carotenoids that are identical to the pigment that fish consume in the wild



Both natural and synthetic carotenoids are processed and absorbed by wild and farmed fish in exactly the same manner

FACT The pigment that gives salmon and trout their distinctive colouration isn't harmful or unnatural —in fact, it's available in concentrated form as diet supplements at your local health food store.

Myth 5 Aquaculture farming pollutes the environment



Nutrient discharge from fish farming operations is organic and comes from two sources – uneaten feed and fish waste. Both of these are biodegradable and readily used by most aquatic ecosystems.

In Canada, decades of experience have led to net-pen aquaculture in balance with the ecosystem. This comes from effective management plans, proper siting, and regulatory regimes that ensure minimum impacts to the environment.

FACT Many wild fish are hatched in aquaculture facilities and released into the wild. Fish produced in hatcheries for stocking purposes are genetically similar to wild fish.

The provincial government's public stocking programs are well managed with a focus on genetics to maintain characteristics beneficial in the wild.

