



September 21, 2020

## **Statement Regarding Executive Order 13921; *Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth***

*This Statement expresses the perspective of the Aquaponics Association and its nationwide Membership regarding White House Executive Order 13921, Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth. It is our hope that this Statement will begin an ongoing conversation in which all parties work together to create a more effective, long-term national system of aquaculture. This Statement was prepared by Symbiotic Aquaponic of Tulsa, Oklahoma, an Affiliate Member of the Aquaponics Association.*

The current Administration's attention to the amplification and development of aquaculture addresses the important goal of increasing our supply of U.S. fish in our diets. However, the Executive Order's method of achieving this goal risks severe negative consequences. The Covid-19 crisis has prompted a long overdue reexamination of our systems of meat production, especially regarding chicken, beef, and pork. This second look has not been kind to these industries. Degradation of our land and waterways, labor abuses, and a frequent disregard for regulation are alarming consumers nationwide. Fish has naturally come to the attention of concerned customers as a viable, safe, and sustainable alternative; a development we welcome and seek to expand.

We do not support the de-regulation of off-shore fishing proposed as a means to boost production. Prioritizing short-term gains over meaningful, long-term viability of aquaculture is contrary to the spirit of the industry aquaculturists have worked so hard to build. Past implementations of largely unmitigated off-shore aquaculture are well correlated with the detriment of the overall fishing supply and environmental health of our waters. Reduced oversight sacrifices the well-being of humans and non-human species. The deregulation of off-shore fishing will result in reduced supply and undermine the longevity of a successful aquaculture industry. The result is higher national expenditures to remediate the damages and long-term damage to an industry.

*The Aquaponics Association is a nonprofit Member-based organization that expands the practice of aquaponics through education, advocacy, and connection*



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**Recirculating, Inland, and Aquaponic culture arose, in many cases, *from our desire to conduct aquaculture in both an environmentally and financially sustainable manner.***

In the spirit of collaboration, and with our nation's best interests at heart, we propose the following actions be considered to promote and aid our industry in its growth.

1. Recognize Recirculating Aquaculture Systems (RAS), Freshwater Pond, and Aquaponic seafood culture as sectors of co-equal importance to marine culture. Ensure that these operators, owners, and entrepreneurs have access to the same benefits, tax incentives, and grants available to marine operations. Write future policy with the varied aspects and disciplines of aquaculture in mind; ensure they do not overpower or overshadow each other in consideration.
2. Establish regular lines of contact between the NOAA Fisheries offices, Regional Aquaculture Center network, USDA Extension Services, and the USDA Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. Use this network to provide established and aspiring aquaculture professionals with a network of educators, advocates, and sources of information at the county and municipal level *using conduits the beneficiaries are already familiar with*. In this way, we can ensure that curriculum, opportunities, and resources are relevant and easily accessible to the unique needs of the regions and demographics they are disseminated to. Let's embrace the varied nature of the entrepreneurs who will grow this industry and create a source of information and resources that effectively serves this sector.
3. Continue to support regulation and oversight of American marine aquaculture. Our industry shares a mutual interest with NOAA managers nationwide; to relieve overfishing and pollution pressure from our fisheries and waterways, while maintaining the ability to provide Americans with healthy, high-quality, and affordable seafood. Help us protect our natural resources, and we will do our part to fill in the supply gap.

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