



Ontario Aquaculture Association

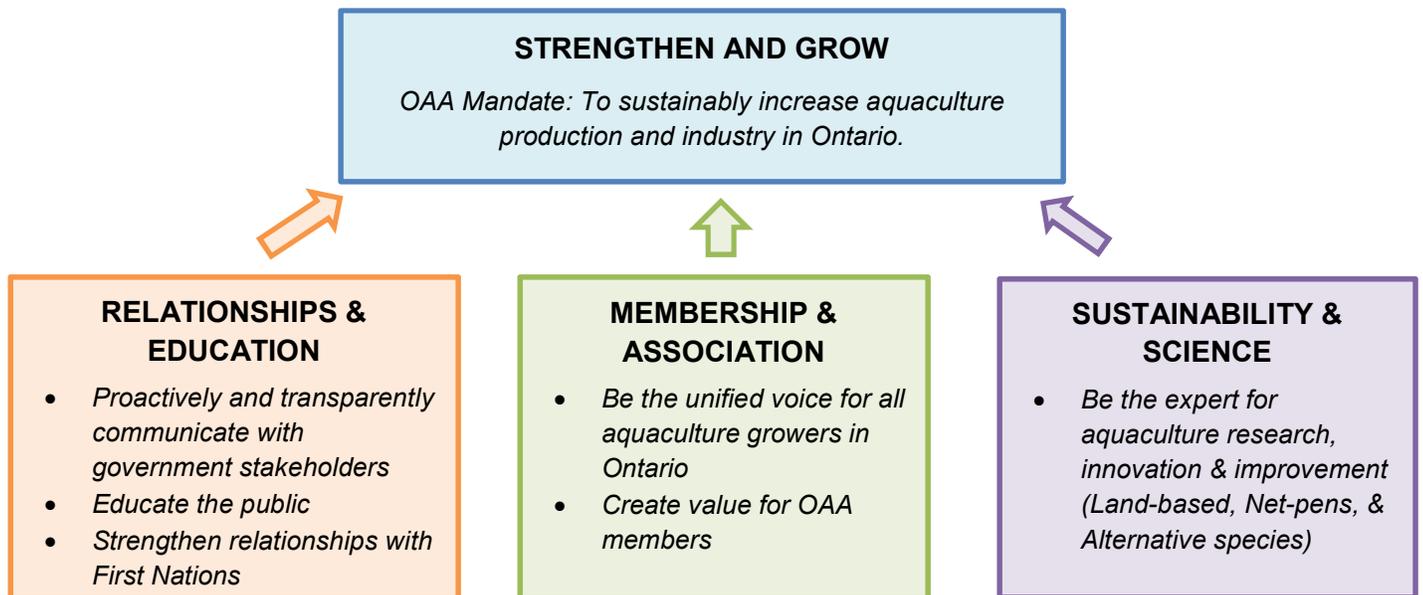
# EAT ONTARIO FARMED SEAFOOD

## ONTARIO AQUACULTURE ASSOCIATION GROWER GATHERING SUMMARY

On August 16 & 17, more than 20 members from the Ontario Aquaculture Association gathered to discuss the major opportunities and barriers facing the growth of Ontario's aquaculture industry over the next decade. The group included representation from across the industry's value chain, including land-based and net-pen trout growers, shrimp producers, multiple feed companies, equipment suppliers, and several First Nations farmers or prospective farmers.

### Strategic Focus:

The group did a check-in on the strategic vision outlined by the association during its restructure in 2015/16 and reoriented the strategic pillars to focus on sustainable growth of the industry in the long-term.



### Key Takeaways:

- The growth of Ontario's seafood farming industry has not been keeping pace with global competitors —** Despite our vast amount of fresh water, solid scientific research on environmental impacts, and growing social licence, Ontario has not been keeping up. In 1997, Iran and Turkey produced the same amount of trout as Ontario (~2.5M pounds), but today grow over 290M pounds (compared to Ontario's 15M in 2018/19). Other countries have similar trends. We've seen positive industry growth since 2012, but there is room for more.
- If we don't grow it, other countries will —** Other countries with blossoming aquaculture industries are starting to flood the Canadian market with fresh trout and shrimp. Our fish and shrimp are higher quality, fresher, and closer to home — let's find a way to grow more of them and fulfill market demand from within our borders.
- Science isn't telling the whole story —** Although we have decades of research highlighting the role that properly-sited freshwater net-pen farms can play in increasing biodiversity in Georgian Bay and the North Channel, sharing that science directly isn't enough to match the anti-aquaculture sensationalism. We need to find more clever, emotional ways to tell our positive stories.
- Not enough government champions —** We support effective regulation of aquaculture in Ontario to ensure all farms operate in the best interest of the environment, fish health, and human rights. However, the absence of

government champions with political and regulatory influence makes overcoming government-imposed barriers challenging. This limits long-term financial investment in the industry, as well as Ontario's prosperity

- **An industry association is critical to our success** — An association with enough financial and human resources is necessary to seize the opportunities and remove the barriers vital for growing the industry in Ontario.

### Barriers to Growth:

Participants identified the following barriers through break-out sessions and facilitated group-wide discussion.

	Strengthen & Grow	Relationships & Education	Membership & Association	Science & Sustainability
Revolving door government that makes it difficult to implement long-lasting change	X	X		
Government departments that cause unnecessary delays to licence applications, renewals, and production increase requests.	X	X		
Market absorption (markets can absorb much higher levels of product, but only when growing at a sustainable pace)	X			
Integrated industry growth (ensuring the right balance between fingerling supply at hatcheries, net-pen capacity, and processing/sales)	X			
Perceived lack of social licence (sales and polls show support is there, but government stakeholders still believe it isn't)	X	X		
Lack of trust in science (it's there, but we need to find more clever ways of sharing it)	X	X		X
Not enough fish health support (ie - Ontario-specific aquatic veterinary support)	X			X
Industry-wide breeding and genetics program for rainbow trout	X			X
Outlier companies who make poor decisions that have reputational consequences for us all	X	X	X	
Inefficient collaboration across the industry on production plans, best management practices, and communications	X	X	X	X
Lack of resources for effective industry association	X	X	X	X

### Key Opportunities:

- **Kids and students** — The group identified that one of the highest-impact ways to educate the public on aquaculture is to reach younger kids and students. This could be done through classroom aquaponics systems installed through partnerships and/or donated product from equipment suppliers.
- **Leading the way for freshwater aquaculture nationwide** — Ontario is the #1 producer of freshwater farmed fish, and could be a national leader in best management practices for freshwater aquaculture across Canada, including genetics, technology, and fish health.
- **Traceability** — The industry move towards increasingly transparent traceability means we have a unique edge in communicating to government and consumers.
- **Presenting fish farming as a climate change solution** — There was consensus that we have enough science to start using messaging such as "Save the Lakes, eat Ontario farmed seafood".
- **Tapping into new networks** — Including agricultural and eco groups that we haven't nurtured yet.
- **More communication with members** — Leveraging OAA's new website and online to share valuable information off/for members and their businesses.
- **More knowledge sharing out-of-province** — We could be forging connections and sharing knowledge with more groups outside of the province, such as on the East and West coasts.

## Advocacy Agenda:

<p><b>FOR NET-PEN FARMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Update 5-year land use permits to 20-year land leases, which will encourage long-term investment in the industry</li><li>• Update 5-year aquaculture licences to 20-year licences, with opportunities to renew and appeal them</li><li>• Finalize objectives for sediment and water quality (Draft EBR #012-7186), and publish to Ontario's Environmental Registry</li><li>• Dedicate policy resources at MNRF towards these and other aquaculture-specific opportunities</li></ul>	<p><b>FOR LAND-BASED FARMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Standardize the regulatory frameworks for aquaculture-specific Environmental Compliance Approvals, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Removal of production limits if water quality limits are established</li><li>○ Exemptions for Recirculating Aquaculture System (RAS) farms to acknowledge limited contributions</li></ul></li><li>• Remove 10% requirement for aquaculture-specific Permits To Take Water in recognition farms are legal non-consumptive users of water</li><li>• Dedicate policy resources at MECP towards these and other aquaculture-specific opportunities, including participation in inter-governmental Aquaculture Management Committee</li></ul>
<p><b>ALL INDUSTRY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish breeding program based on Ontario genetics, in collaboration with industry and Alma Aquaculture Research Station (partnership between OMAFRA and University of Guelph)</li><li>• Streamline ability to add species to the Aquaculture Licence List, Schedule B, which includes changing the list to a policy framework, rather than requiring Order in Council</li><li>• Provide access to agricultural grant opportunities currently denied to aquaculture</li></ul>	