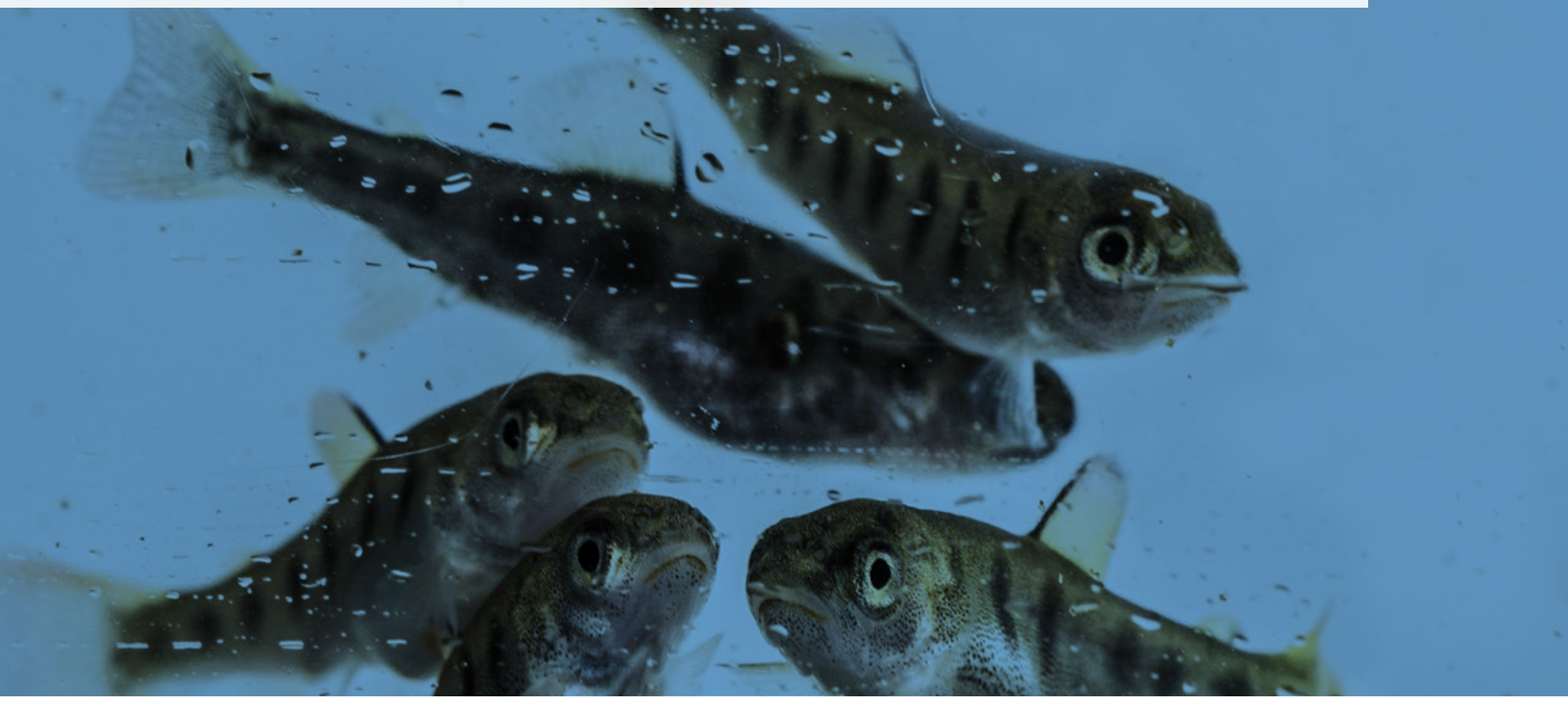
# HIGHLIGHTS FROM ONTARIO AQUACULTURE 2019/20



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Ontario Aquaculture Association

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# GROWING TOGETHER

After a long day on the farm this summer, I sat down beside my father. With over 50 years of aquaculture under his belt, he shared this wisdom:

**"Sometimes fish farming isn't always about thriving, it's about surviving. And the only way you can do either is by working together."**

In this highlights brochure, you will see many instances of our sector working together over the last 18 months to see Ontario aquaculture grow and thrive.

We saw huge success on the government advocacy front with more regulatory changes and high-profile events, meetings and tours than ever in the Ontario Aquaculture Association's history.

Our farmers came together to encourage an independent assessment of our sector that resulted in Ocean Wise Recommendation for all Ontario-farmed rainbow trout.

And the much-anticipated results of a collaborative research study showed the many positive contributions that fish farms can make to surrounding ecosystems.

These and other activities are profiled in the following pages, and each show Ontarians that we can continue growing our sector responsibly and sustainably together.

What we don't highlight are the many ways — both big and small — that our farmers, suppliers and government champions have joined forces to survive the Covid-19 pandemic.

I am impressed by how many groups throughout our community are working together to find creative solutions, efficiencies, and motivation during an uncertain time. We know, as my father knows, that we will get farther faster when we do it together.

On behalf of the Ontario Aquaculture Association board of directors, I want to thank our 44 member organizations for continually engaging in the advocacy and education work of the association.

I encourage each of you to keep sharing your successes, challenges and asks so that together we can grow and thrive Ontario's aquaculture sector for many years to come.

**RJ Taylor, Managing Director, Ontario Aquaculture Association**

Environment minister Jeff Yurek sharing the Ontario government's support of the aquaculture sector.

Ford government cabinet ministers feeding fish during their tour of Cedar Crest Trout Farms.

# ONTARIO GOVERNMENT PROCLAIMS SUSTAINABILITY OF AQUACULTURE SECTOR

August 2019 — Ontario cabinet ministers from the Ford government joined 60+ fish and shrimp farmers to announce how they streamlined the province's regulatory framework to help the aquaculture sector grow.

The Ford government announced key changes that add business certainty, unlock loan and investment opportunities, and help the sector grow, including:

- Finalizing objectives for water quality for net-pen farms, on the industry's request
- Extending aquaculture licences from 5 to 20 years
- Restructuring public land tenure from 5-year land-use permits to 20-year leases for net-pen farms

"Aquaculture is one the sectors that is most dependent on our ability to keep our waters clean. Ontario's fish farming community are known world-wide for finding some of the most sustainable ways to operate, while ensuring there is minimal impact on the environment."

**Hon. Jeff Yurek, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks**

"Aquaculture is already the fastest growing agri-food sector in the world. These changes carry our regulatory regime into the 21st century, and they bring us one step closer to realizing our goal of doubling fish and shrimp production in the province within five years."

**Susan Cole, president of the Ontario Aquaculture Association and owner of Cole-Munro Foods**

"Businesses like Cedar Crest Trout Farm play an important role in providing a quality food product for Ontarians and new economic opportunities for our region and province, and so I'm pleased to see our government supporting our local business and the aquaculture industry. I'm excited about the potential to significantly expand this industry, jobs and the economy."

**Hon. Bill Walker, Associate Minister of Energy**

# OCEANWISE RECOMMENDS ALL ONTARIO-FARMED RAINBOW TROUT

October 2019 — Following an extensive independent review years in the making, Ocean Wise officially recommended Ontario-farmed rainbow trout as a sustainable seafood choice.

The popular Vancouver-based conservation program endorses all rainbow and steelhead trout grown in floating net-pens and flow-through systems in Ontario based on their low environmental impact.

Before making this recommendation specific to Ontario producers, Ocean Wise reviewed data pertaining to water quality, habitat impacts, antimicrobial usage, interactions with wild fish, feed ingredients, and escape risk. The review included consultations with third-party scientists with expertise in ecology, fisheries science and aquaculture.

"The Ocean Wise seafood program is pleased to be able to recommend Ontario-farmed rainbow trout. This will give consumers the confidence they need to make the best choices for lake, river and ocean health. When someone sees the Ocean Wise symbol next to a seafood item in a freezer, on a shelf, or in the fresh display case, they know that it has been raised responsibly and met a high standard that is founded in science."

**Sophika Kostyniuk, manager of the Ocean Wise Seafood Program**

"Even though we're growing more rainbow trout than ever before, we still aren't keeping up with market demand within Ontario — let alone exploring our massive export potential. This Ocean Wise Recommendation goes a long way in demonstrating our sector's sustainability, which reassures the people and government of Ontario that we'll be careful stewards of the environment as we continue to grow."

**RJ Taylor, managing director for the Ontario Aquaculture Association**

# NEW AQUACULTURE CLASSROOM RESOURCES FOR ONTARIO TEACHERS

March 2020 — Ontario students in grades 7–12 are diving into learning about the province's aquaculture sector thanks to a new educational partnership between AgScape and the Ontario Aquaculture Association.

AgScape and the OAA developed several science-based, curriculum-linked teaching materials available to teachers free of charge. The was launched in March 2020 as part of Canadian Agriculture Literacy Month.

**17,000**

**STUDENTS REACHED IN MARCH 2020**

The guide contains an overview of aquaculture in Ontario along with three interactive lesson plans focused on learning more about fish farming, potential career pathways and how to build a successful fish farming business.

"As one of the fastest-growing food production sectors in Ontario, it's an exciting time to shine the spotlight on aquaculture and educate students about the rewarding careers that they can pursue."

**Mercedes Unwin, program and resource manager at AgScape**

AgScape

Farming fish using net-pens, like these at Cole-Munro Trout Farms and Buzwah Fisheries, has been shown to increase wild fish populations.

## NET-PEN FARMS STUDY

# DECADE-LONG STUDY SHOWED POSITIVE IMAPCTS OF ONTARIO NET-PEN FARMS

March 2019 — A scientific article published in Freshwater Biology examined the environmental impacts of introducing a net-pen fish farm in the Experimental Lakes Area in northern Ontario.

Researchers operated a fish farm for five years in the lake, and compared ecosystem impacts against eight years of pre- and post-farm data, as well as nearby reference lakes.

Among other findings, the data showed that the populations of wild prey fish increased dramatically while the farm was in operation, with the most notable being a doubling of the native lake trout population. These increases to wild fish populations decreased as soon as the fish farm was removed from the lake.

tvo

## READ MORE IN THE TVO ANALYSIS*

**"Why you may not need to worry about Ontario farmed fish after all"**

"We really overloaded the lake, and we did not cause the sort of things that people are scared about. We didn't cause huge problem for the native fish population; we didn't cause huge algal blooms."

**Dr. Cheryl Podemski, scientist with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and one of the lead researchers on the study**

*click on the article to read more

# BRINGING THE ONTARIO AQUACULTURE COMMUNITY TOGETHER AT 2019 CONFERENCE

April 2019 — More than 120 producers, suppliers, researchers and industry champions gathered in Collingwood for the 2019 Ontario Aquaculture Association conference. Unfortunately the 2020 conference was cancelled due to the public health impacts of Covid, but we hope to gather again in 2021!

**28** PRESENTATIONS

**120** PARTICIPANTS

**2** DAYS

## OPEN FOR BUSINESS: GOVERNMENT HIGHLIGHTS

**Left: Ontario's aquaculture industry got a boost with a coveted spot at a barbecue in the backyard of the Ford family home.**

**Right: Premier Doug Ford welcomes Susan Cole, Craig Hughson and RJ Taylor to his backyard.**

## ONTARIO RAINBOW TROUT FEATURED IN FORD FAMILY HOME

June 2019 — OAA hosted a highly visible trout tasting booth in exclusive Ontario-themed barbecue in the backyard of the Ford family home. On June 5, representatives from the Ontario Aquaculture Association were invited to participate in a closed "Taste of Ontario" event.

The barbecue showcased Ontario's agricultural sectors as open for business for Consul-Generals from more than 70 countries. Many cabinet and caucus members from the Ford government also participated.

The trout was prepared by students from George Brown College's Culinary Arts program. They smoked the fillets on cedar planks and served on cucumber with heirloom tomato salsa.

Staff at Cole-Munro Trout Farms getting ready to harvest Ontario rainbow trout in Georgian Bay.

## OAA ADVANCES THE SECTOR'S ADVOCACY AGENDA

The Ontario Aquaculture Association was able to achieve the majority of our industry's government asks for 2019/20 thanks to strategic, persistent lobbying efforts, including:

- Finalizing objectives for water quality for net-pen farms
- Extending net-pen aquaculture licences from 5 to 20 years
- Restructuring land tenure from 5-year land-use permits to 20-year leases for net-pens
- Removing production limits on land-based discharge permits (ECAs)
- Enhancing our visibility and reputation among agriculture, natural resources and environment ministries
- Other ad hoc issues management and individual business requests

Other highlights include:

- Landmark Government of Ontario announcement focused on the sustainability of Ontario's aquaculture sector that included significant cabinet ministers from the Ford government
- Hosted a highly visible trout tasting booth in exclusive Ontario-themed barbecue in the backyard of the Ford family home
- RJ Taylor, OAA managing director, appointed to the Minister's Advisory Group for the Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and the province's Species at Risk Program Advisory Committee by the Minister of Environment
- Farm tours with representatives from Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry, and Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks
- Over 50+ meetings and events with provincial politicians and staffers at all relevant Ontario ministries to keep excitement alive on Ontario aquaculture's growth potential, as well as federally through consultations and in-person meetings

## NEW RESEARCH PRIORITIES FOR ONTARIO'S AQUACULTURE SECTOR

June 2019 — The OAA partnered with the Livestock Research Innovation Corporation to host a one-day workshop to define research priorities for the province's farmed fish and shrimp sector.

The gathering included 40+ farmers, suppliers, researchers, non-profit representatives and government champions from across Ontario and beyond.

Throughout the day, they discussed specific needs and trends, barriers, and opportunities for aquaculture research in Ontario, with a focus on open-water net pens, land-based farming, alternative technologies and alternative species.

Further discussions oriented around genetics, nutrition, health and welfare, environmental impacts, economics and market development and social licence.

## ONTARIO RECRUITMENT DAY AT FLEMING COLLEGE

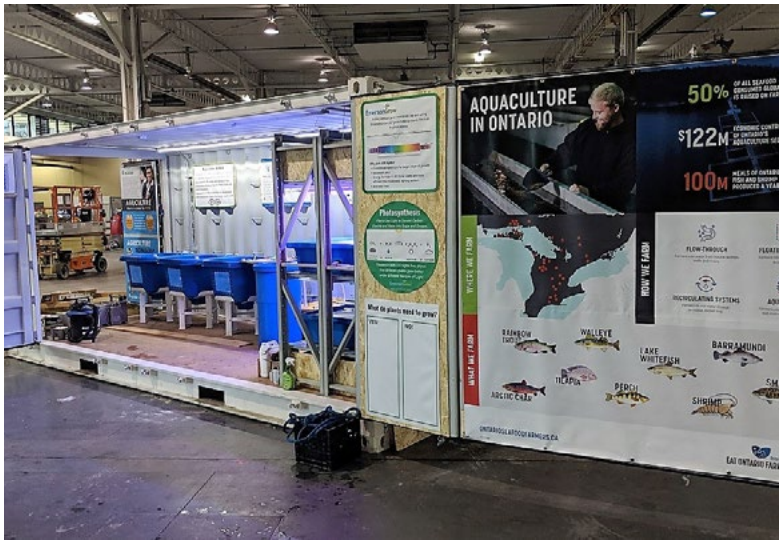
February 2020 — The OAA hosted the first-ever Ontario Recruitment Day at Fleming College where nine different Ontario businesses presented and pitched students about the work and life opportunities in the province.

## CELEBRATING ONTARIO AQUACULTURE AT THE CANADIAN NATIONAL EXHIBITION

August 2019 — If you were one of the 1.5 million people that attended the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) in Toronto this summer, chances are you got a lesson in Ontario fish and shrimp farming.

The OAA partnered with Ripple Farms and AgScape to put together a live aquaponics demonstration at the entrance to the CNE's popular agriculture pavilion. People of all ages learned about culturing fish and plants in a specially designed storage container complete with live tilapia and cabbage. A team of expert staff and volunteers talked to them about fish farming, aquaponics, and sustainable food production.

Anybody wandering by couldn't miss the larger-than-life infographic explaining Ontario's diverse aquaculture sector, including Ernie Hardeman, Ontario's Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs who stopped by for a visit on August 29.




**Visitors at the Canadian National Exhibition got a lesson in fish farming as they entered the agricultural pavilion.**

## CONTRIBUTING PROSPERITY TO ONTARIO

**100+ MILLION**

Meals of farmed seafood grown in Ontario every year (5,901 tonnes)

**$126 MILLION**

Economic contribution of Ontario's aquaculture sector (2019)

**75 %**

Amount of farmed seafood that are grown through long-term partnerships with indigenous communities

Barramundi, like these at Sandplains Aquaculture, are one of the newest species being farmed in Ontario

## IN THE HEADLINES*

### MOM IN THE KNOW JULIE FINDLAY SERVES UP SOME FRESH AND LOCAL RAINBOW TROUT

(Global TV Toronto)

### PROVINCE TO ALLOW LONGER FISH FARM LICENCES

(Sun Media)

### WHY YOU MAY NOT NEED TO WORRY ABOUT ONTARIO FARMED FISH AFTER ALL

(TVO.org)

### AQUACULTURE AMBASSADOR WESLEY CHASE, ALMA AQUACULTURE RESEARCH STATION

(SeaWestNews)

### A CLOSER LOOK AT COLE-MUNRO FISHERIES

(Aquaculture North America)

*click on each of the articles to read more

# IN MEMORIAM

Ontario's aquaculture industry lost several pioneers this year that helped the sector grow and thrive over many decades.

ORVAL FORD

NEIL MACBETH

RICK KNOWLES

JOHN WOODHOUSE

## MEMBERSHIP

## THANKS TO OUR RECORD-HIGH 44 MEMBERS!

The Ontario Aquaculture Association (OAA) was created by industry to foster growth, innovation and partnerships across the province's thriving seafood farming sector.

By production and volume, the OAA represents more than 98% of the aquaculture industry in Ontario, including finfish and shrimp growers, land-based and open net-pen operations, seafood for food or recreational fishing, feed suppliers and other companies invested in growing healthy, sustainable protein in Ontario.

Spawning days at the Alma Aquaculture Research Station always get a little wacky.

## Sustaining Members

ASK Farms
Aqua-Cage Fisheries
Blue Spring Trout Farms
Buzwah Fisheries
Camp Creek Trout Farm
Cedar Crest Trout Farms
Cole-Munro Trout Farms
GOOD4Ushrimp Inc.
Icy Waters Arctic Charr
Izumi Aquaculture
Kolapore Springs
Lyndon Fish Hatcheries
Manitoulin Trout Farms
Planet Shrimp
Ripple Farms
Sandplains Aquaculture
Springhills Trout
Williamsford Trout Farm

## Patron Members

Aurora Strategy
Badinotti North America
Bluewater Fish Feeds, a division of Sharpe Farm Supplies
Canadian Aquaculture Systems
Cole-Munro Foods
Deep Trekker
EWOS/Cargill
Fish Farm Supply
Future Fish Systems
Future Nets
Hoskin Scientific
Kropf Industrial
MTS Environmental
Ocean Wise Conservation Association
Prairie Aquatech

**Hatchery owner Arlen Taylor poses with one of the rainbow trout broodstock at Cedar Crest Trout Farms.**

Riverence
Rainbow Net Rigging Ltd.
Skretting
Sweeney International Marine Corp
Troutlodge
Upper Grand Veterinary Services
Wittaya Aqua

## Supporting Members

Fleming College (Aquaculture Program)
University of Guelph — Aquaculture Centre
Waubetek Business Development Corporation

## Individual Members

Gary Chapman
Terry Drost
Veronique (Nikki) LePage
Rupert Kindersley

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