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Contact: jennifer.disiena@storypartnersdc.com

Bipartisan Bill to Establish National Standards for Offshore Aquaculture Introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives

Expansion of aquaculture would create jobs and economic growth in coastal and agricultural communities

Washington, D.C. – On March 11, 2020, House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson (D, MN-7) and Congressman Steven Palazzo (R, MS-4) introduced the bipartisan Advancing the Quality and Understanding of American Aquaculture (AQUAA) Act (H.R. 6191) in the U.S. House of Representatives. SATS applauds Reps. Peterson and Palazzo for working across party lines to bring awareness and encourage debate in Congress on the topic of expanding American aquaculture.

“A predictable regulatory framework and National Standards for aquaculture production are critical to the competitiveness of the American seafood industry, which currently faces a seafood trade deficit of \$14 billion,” said Bill DiMento, president of SATS and vice president of Corporate Sustainability and Government Affairs at High Liner Foods.

“Aquaculture is the fastest-growing food sector in the world, but the U.S. ranks only 16th in the production of farm-raised seafood. Half of the fish eaten in the United States comes from farms – but not from American farms. We can do better. With global demand for seafood projected to increase by 70% in the next 30 years – domestic aquaculture, combined with our wild fish harvesting – could one day meet the entire U.S. demand for seafood. Federal legislation is an important first step,” DiMento added.

The AQUAA Act would establish National Standards for sustainable offshore aquaculture and clarify a regulatory pathway for offshore aquaculture in the U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ) which will support growth of the domestic offshore aquaculture industry.

The regulated expansion of domestic aquaculture would stimulate economic growth in coastal and agricultural communities across the U.S., create thousands of jobs, and provide a steady supply of healthy and affordable seafood, while protecting our wild-capture fisheries and natural resources. Increased aquaculture production would also benefit farmers of soybeans, corn and peas -- products that would be used to create fish feed, easing pressure on ocean resources while providing a new market for U.S. farmers.

Aquaculture is an environmentally sound approach to increasing America's production of seafood. With a far lower environmental impact than any terrestrial means of meat production, aquaculture is one of the most efficient methods of producing animal protein.

The lack of a predictable, affordable and efficient permitting process for offshore aquaculture in the U.S. has led many American companies to establish operations overseas – sending jobs and economic opportunities abroad. Federal action aims to reverse that trend and increase U.S. production of healthful seafood.

“Aquaculture is a fast-growing agriculture industry that is creating jobs and improving our country's food security,” said Chairman Peterson. “It also creates a market for soybeans as they provide nutritious aquafeed. Our bill will streamline the permitting process and build upon research and development efforts that are underway.”

Rep. Palazzo said, “The United States imports nearly 90 percent of our seafood, and of that, more than half is produced through foreign aquaculture. The AQUAA Act streamlines the federal permitting process to usher in a wave of American aquaculture and reduce our dependency on foreign seafood imports while we grow a sustainable market. Food security is national security and we must work to ensure America is prepared to meet the needs of tomorrow's food demand.”

Read more about the benefits of offshore aquaculture here:
<https://www.strongerthroughseafood.org/multimedia-center>

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About Stronger America Through Seafood

Stronger America Through Seafood (SATS) advocates for policies and regulations that help secure a stronger America through increased U.S. production of healthful, sustainable, and affordable seafood. Learn more at www.strongerthroughseafood.org.