

## **Farm Bill Advocacy Update from National Aquaculture Association**

For over 33 years, the [National Aquaculture Association](#) (NAA) has been the unifying voice of the United States' aquaculture sector. NAA remains committed to the growth and success of all American aquaculture farms through collaborations with state and federal governments that foster a positive business climate and cost-effective regulations that ensure environmental stewardship. As a not-for-profit agricultural trade association, we fulfill our mission primarily through federal advocacy, public outreach, and farm promotion.

The NAA is working hard to communicate U.S. aquaculture priorities and get marker bills introduced to inform the pending Farm Bill. While the word "aquaculture" is more popular than ever in Congress, we still have an uphill battle to achieve critical changes.

The following key priorities have been developed through conversations with farmers and national, regional, state and species aquaculture associations and the collective expertise of NAA's Legislative and Government Relations Committee and Board of Directors. Visit our [Legislative Priorities page](#) for bill details and more information.

**Waive Adjusted Gross Income Limitation for ELAP** – Include in the Farm Bill language from [H.R. 4127 / S. 2704 – Fair Access to Agriculture Disaster Programs Act](#). Prior to the expanded availability of USDA Farm Service Agency's Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm Raised Fish Program (ELAP) in May 2021, there was no catastrophic disaster assistance available for U.S. aquaculture and almost zero insurance options exist. While we applaud USDA's expansion of aquaculture eligibility, additional changes are needed.

Farms with an Adjusted Gross Income greater than \$900,000 are ineligible for ELAP payments. Aquaculture is a capital intense farming effort with high input costs, long growing cycles, and high value end-products. The \$900,000 cap has not accounted for inflation or increases to the costs of labor, feed, equipment, and maintenance. Due to the declining value of the US dollar, economic inflation and the uniquely decentralized nature of domestic aquaculture, the AGI limit severely restricts program relevance and efficacy. H.R. 4127 / S. 2704 Waives the AGI cap for farms with an income that is 75% or more from farm production. Waiving the AGI cap will benefit all U.S. aquaculture farms through stabilizing supply chains for small farmers and giving larger farms a disaster safety net, which buoys production chains following natural disasters.

**Recognize Drought as an ELAP Eligible Adverse Event** - [H.R. 5691 Drought Assistance Improvement Act](#) and [S. 3836 CRAWDAD Act](#), will include drought in the Farm Bill as an ELAP eligible adverse event along with excessive heat, wind and cold, earthquake, flood, hurricane, tidal surge, tornado, or volcanic eruption.

**Increase the Authorization for USDA's Regional Aquaculture Centers** - [H.R. 3542 / S. 2619 – Promoting American Competition in Research Act](#) will increase the authorization in the Farm Bill for the five Regional Aquaculture Centers. The Centers support critical aquaculture extension and research services that are guided by and directly benefit America's aquaculture farmers. A 2017 analysis reported a 37-fold return on federal research investment. Without any

increase since 2013, the annual budget for all five Centers is a mere \$5 million. The industry services provided by the Regional Aquaculture Centers are critical and additional authorization for later appropriations is critically needed. See our [Review of the Regional Aquaculture Centers](#) to learn more.

**Create a USDA Office of Aquaculture** – H.R. 3951 / [S. 2211 – Sustaining Healthy Ecosystems, Livelihoods, and Local Seafood Act](#) will create in the Farm Bill an aquaculture focused office with USDA and an advisory committee to inform the office and educate agency staff across the many programs beneficial to US aquaculture.

The U.S. farming community recognizes USDA as their lead agency. The 2020 agency-to-farming community analysis, [Aquaculture is Agriculture](#), illuminated a variety of specific programs that would benefit aquaculture farmers given emphasis and authority. These four priorities should be the focus of the new office and empower USDA to better serve the aquaculture industry:

1. Expand eligibility to seaweed farmers through the research, technology transfer, and economic development programs already available to terrestrial crops.
2. Expand aquaculture farm eligibility within USDA programs and establish a definition of aquaculture that is inclusive of all commodity types.
3. Create USDA Organic Standards for aquaculture products that will increase domestic value and require foreign products labeled as organic under foreign standards to meet U.S. standards.
4. USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service should regulate biotechnology for livestock, poultry, and aquaculture products. The Coordinated Framework for the Regulation of Biotechnology severely limits opportunities to improve the health and welfare of animals, adapt to climate change or improve our competitiveness.