



AquaNet
Directed Call for Proposals - January 5, 2005

STANDARDS FOR ORGANIC AQUACULTURE

AquaNet is inviting proposals in the area of *standards for organic aquaculture*. Proponents of organic aquaculture advocate production and processing methods to ensure the sustainability of aquaculture, and to promote aquaculture products with health benefits for human consumers. Proponents additionally advocate production and processing methods consistent with the requirements of social justice, including such matters as labour practices and fair treatment of local and small businesses. International efforts to develop standards for organic aquaculture products and processes have begun. This Call for Proposals responds to the need to assess the extent to which the Canadian aquaculture sector meets or can develop and adopt emerging international standards, production methods, and processes for organic aquaculture.

The attached document describes the rationale and justification, suggested team members, partners, and deliverables.

Evaluation criteria for the proposal, the submission process and a description of AquaNet policies and procedures pertaining to the awarding and monitoring of research grants are posted in the research section of AquaNet's Website at www.aquanet.ca.

AquaNet invites applications from all eligible researchers in the fields described. A maximum of one year of funding will be available. To be eligible, research proposals must

- State relevance of the proposed work to the Canadian aquaculture sector;
- Commit to rapid turn-around of results, i.e., within one year of project initiation.

Deadline for application: February 14, 2005.

Research question:

How closely do Canadian aquaculture production and processing standards match emerging international standards for organic aquaculture, e.g., International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements Basic Standards? What changes would bring Canadian standards into conformity with IFOAM and other emerging standards? What costs are reasonably associated with such changes?

Rationale and justification:

Organic food production and processing practices are increasingly popular in Canada and around the world. As consumer demand drives production and Canadian producers face organic standards as an opportunity and challenge, it is crucial that Canadian producers and consumers possess a research-based, independently developed understanding of the gap between current Canadian standards and the requirements of organic production. Understanding the gap will enable consumers to make educated choices regarding seafood products, and will enable Canadian producers to participate fully in the emerging global organic food market.

There is an emerging international consensus regarding the conditions of organic aquaculture production. Organic aquaculture is said to include such methods as use of indigenous plants and animals in circumscribed production systems relying on non-synthetic inputs (often including polyculture), the absence of antibiotics in production of humanely raised animals, and production methods which include and sustain local communities. This emerging consensus has not yet, however, produced a finite and transparent set of universal standards. Moreover, Basic Standards under discussion by IFOAM will require implementation in particular states whose existing legal and policy environments must be taken into consideration by advocates of organic production and processing. Canadian producers and consumers can only access the advantages of organic aquaculture to the extent Canadian aquaculture products and processes represent a reasonable and acceptable implementation of accepted principles of organic production. It is anticipated that approaches to the research question set out above will engage the question of the stability of the consensus regarding the nature of organic production, the legal or other means required to implement standards for organic production, and the question of regulation and enforcement.

Members of the interdisciplinary research team should have expertise in:

- Animal welfare
- Fish production
- Fish health
- Consumer studies
- Ethics/social justice
- Law and policy
- Integration of local and traditional knowledge with expert knowledge
- Marine ecosystem health
- Business strategy

Partners:

- Aquaculture producers
- NGOs
- Fish health professionals
- Federal or provincial departments or agencies
- Feed companies
- Marketing boards or councils
- Wholesale or retail operators
- First Nations
- Animal welfare groups

Deliverables:

- Analysis of the regulatory gap between available and dominant organic production and processing standards, and current Canadian legal, policy, and voluntary compliance frameworks.
- Development of recommendations for bridging the gap using existing means or innovative partnerships for voluntary regulation, or legal, policy, or regulatory change.
- Evaluation of costs of compliance with emerging international norms regarding organic aquaculture production.
- Training of highly qualified personnel for the Canadian aquaculture sector of tomorrow (graduate students, post-doctoral fellows)
- Publication of results in fora likely to lead to wide dissemination and uptake of AquaNet-funded research results: peer-reviewed journals, trade journals, aquaculture sector groups, organic food sector groups.