



October 14, 2019

Senator Roger Wicker, Chairman  
United States Senate  
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation  
Washington, DC 20510-6125

Re: October 16, 2019 Hearing on “Feeding America: Making Sustainable Offshore Aquaculture a Reality.”

Dear Senator Wicker,

Thank you for the invitation to testify at the hearing on “Feeding America: Making Sustainable Offshore Aquaculture a Reality” on October 16, 2019. My testimony on the opportunities and barriers to expanding sustainable aquaculture in the U.S. to foster informed discussions on the environment, economic, and social impacts of open ocean aquaculture is enclosed. I will focus my testimony on the health and nutritional benefits of seafood and how Seafood Nutrition Partnership is improving public health by encouraging healthy seafood consumption.

### **Health and Nutritional Benefits of Eating Seafood**

Eating seafood solves many of the key issues we face today. Seafood is essential for our health, the health of our planet, and our future food security. Seafood, which includes fish and shellfish, is a healthy lean protein and a nutrition powerhouse filled with vitamins, minerals, and essential omega-3 fatty acids eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) + docosahexaenoic acid (DHA).

These omega-3s are essential because our bodies cannot produce them to any appreciable amount and therefore we need to eat seafood and/or take supplements as needed. Seafood supports heart health, brain health, eye health, and overall wellness.

- There are over 40,000 studies since the 1970’s that have been published on the health benefits of seafood and omega-3s.
- The brain is made up of fats and DHA omega-3 fatty acids are key building blocks for the cell structure. It has been said that as calcium is to bones, DHA is to the brain.
- Moms to be who ate seafood at least twice a week had babies with higher IQ than moms who did not eat seafood.
- Numerous high-quality studies show that eating seafood as part of a healthy diet can help to reduce the risks of dying from heart disease by 30-50%.



- Studies show that people with higher omega-3 levels in their blood had an 80-90% risk reduction in sudden cardiac death.
- Half of the eye's light detecting cells are made up of omega-3s.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture and Health and Human Services Dietary Guidelines for Americans<sup>i</sup> and other prominent health organizations such as the American Heart Association<sup>ii</sup> and World Health Organization<sup>iii</sup> recommend eating seafood at least twice a week and taking in at least 250mg of omega-3 fatty acids EPA+DHA a day. Unfortunately, only about 10% of Americans follow the dietary guideline to eat seafood twice a week<sup>iv</sup> and Americans on average take in about 80-90mg of omega-3s EPA+DHA per day<sup>v</sup>.

### **Seafood's Nutritional Role in America's Public Health Crisis**

Per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 7 out of 10 premature deaths in the U.S. can be preventable through diet and lifestyle changes<sup>vi</sup>. 90% of our \$3.3 Trillion in healthcare spending is on chronic diseases and mental health conditions<sup>vii</sup>. Eating the recommended amounts of seafood can be part of the solution to our public health crisis.

### **Seafood Nutrition Partnership's Role in Improving Public Health by Encouraging Healthy Seafood Consumption**

Seafood Nutrition Partnership (SNP) is a charitable non-profit formed in 2013 with a mission to help Americans get healthier through a balanced diet that includes seafood.

- Our Vision: For Americans to live smarter and healthier through sustainable seafood.
- Our Strategy: Build lifelong seafood consumers.

SNP is supported by our Board of Directors, Scientific & Nutrition Advisory Council, National Leadership Council, Ambassadors, Partners, and Donors<sup>viii</sup>. SNP's work includes:

- Communicating Seafood Nutrition Science<sup>ix</sup>: We hold an annual State of the Science Symposium to bring the latest seafood nutrition science and information to global health leaders and nutrition policy makers. We translate available science into educational resources for Health & Nutrition Professionals, Retail & Foodservice Operators, K-12 Schools, Workplace Wellness, and the general public.
- Educating Health & Nutrition Professionals<sup>x</sup>: We have an extensive reach with health & nutrition professionals. To date we have reached over 26,000 Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs). RDNs are trusted health and nutrition advisors and many work



in retail, foodservice, workplace wellness, K-12 schools, higher education, healthcare, and institutions.

- Conducting Public Health Campaigns:
  - We conduct public health campaigns to build awareness of the health benefits of consuming seafood and educating people on how to buy, cook, and eat seafood<sup>xi</sup>.
  - Our #Seafood2xWk Campaign has signed up 52,298 people to pledge to eat seafood at least twice a week.
  - Our newest #LittleSeafoodies Campaign is encouraging families to feed their kids more seafood to build lifelong seafood consumers.
  - These public health campaigns have been conducted in Birmingham AL; Boston, MA; Brunswick, GA; Charleston WV; Hartford / New Haven CT; Indianapolis, IN; Jacksonville, FL; Lexington, KY; Memphis, TN; Oklahoma City, OK; Toledo, OH.
  - To date we have generated over 7 billion positive impressions on the importance of eating seafood for better health.

Since our founding in 2013, the per capita consumption of seafood in the U.S. has grown from 14 pounds to 16 pounds per person per year<sup>xii</sup>, and 1 in 3 Americans have started to add seafood to their diets more often.

### **Opportunities and barriers to expanding sustainable aquaculture in the U.S. to foster informed discussions on the environment, economic, and social impacts of open ocean aquaculture**

Opportunities: The opportunities to expanding sustainable aquaculture in the U.S. are the ability to ensure a healthier America, support our future food security, and support food equity. Seafood is important for our citizens to eat to support overall health and wellness, it has a much lower environmental footprint than land-based agriculture, and an adequate supply of seafood will help to make it available for all Americans.

Americans currently eat on average 16 pounds of seafood per person per year. If we all ate two portions of seafood a week, or 8 ounces of seafood a week, we will need 26 pounds of seafood per person per year. We do not currently have enough seafood to provide every American with the recommended two servings of seafood per week. With 70% of the planet covered by oceans and currently only about 3% of the ocean is utilized to grow our food, we have the capacity and know-how to grow more healthy seafood for our citizens.



Through the work of Seafood Nutrition Partnership, consumers are getting more comfortable with eating seafood as it is being recognized for its numerous health benefits as well as a sustainable protein option for the future<sup>xiii</sup>. Today, 80-90% of U.S. retailers and restaurants have a sustainable seafood policy in place. So, American consumers can feel good about choosing seafood.

Barriers: The barriers to expanding sustainable aquaculture are around the misconceptions of farmed fish. We encourage consumers to eat a variety of sustainable seafood that is both wild and farmed, domestic and imported. We receive many questions on farmed fish, such as whether it is okay to eat farmed fish, if it is as nutritionally beneficial as wild fish, and general uncertainty around how fish is raised.

We remind consumers that seafood is the last source of wild food that we have commercially available. Almost everything we have on our dinner plates, from beef, chicken, pork, vegetables, fruits, and grains are farmed. America has a beautiful history and heritage of being skilled farmers of our great land and we have the experience of good farming practices that we can take to farming in our oceans. We encourage fish farmers to utilize the best available science and responsible farming practices to grow healthy seafood for Americans. We need to communicate the importance of eating both wild and farmed fish to the American public, and we need to have an adequate supply of healthy seafood to meet the growing seafood demand.

Nutritional profile of farmed fish: From a nutritional standpoint, farmed fish have a similar nutrient profile to that of wild fish. A great level of science and technical skills are required to grow fish successfully at the commercial level and fish are fed a feed that mimics what wild fish eat in the wild. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has a FoodData Central database<sup>xiv</sup> that analyzes the major foods available to the American public, and it shows that farmed fish is nutritionally comparable to that of wild fish.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the importance of seafood nutrition for the American public at the U. S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation hearing on October 16, 2019. I look forward to productive discussions on feeding Americans healthy seafood.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Cornish".

Linda Cornish, MBA  
Founder & President



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- i <https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/>
  - ii <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/fats/fish-and-omega-3-fatty-acids>
  - iii [https://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/5\\_population\\_nutrient/en/index13.html](https://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/5_population_nutrient/en/index13.html)
  - iv [https://ods.od.nih.gov/pubs/2015\\_dgac\\_scientific\\_report.pdf](https://ods.od.nih.gov/pubs/2015_dgac_scientific_report.pdf)
  - v <https://wwwn.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes/Default.aspx>
  - vi <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/leading-causes-of-death.htm>
  - vii <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/about/costs/index.htm>
  - viii <https://www.seafoodnutrition.org/about-us/>
  - ix <https://www.seafoodnutrition.org/seafood-research/>
  - x <https://www.seafoodnutrition.org/resources/health-professionals/>
  - xi <https://www.seafoodnutrition.org/>
  - xii <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/fisheries-united-states-2017-report>
  - xiii <https://www.seafoodnutrition.org/seafood-research/seafood-sustainability/>
  - xiv <https://fdc.nal.usda.gov/index.html>