



Opinion

We need to be proud and loud for our seafood production

If done right, we can realize true sustainable outcomes and drive the revitalization of coastal communities across Canada promised by a dynamic and innovative seafood sector.



Paul Lansbergen & Timothy Kennedy

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The world is embarking on international negotiations of a new biodiversity framework. This will include a vision for 2050 and interim targets for 2030. At the same time, Canada is also working to implement the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), including those on food security and oceans. This presents an opportunity for Canada to creatively realize balanced sustainability solutions (social, economic, environmental) for oceans development and protection.

There is huge potential for Canada to further develop its seafood resources as part of the



Bernadette Jordan, minister of fisheries, oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard, is pictured leaving a caucus meeting in December. The federal government has committed to conserving 25 per cent of our waters by 2025 and 30 per cent by 2030. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

“Blue Food Revolution.” At present, the world only gets three per cent of its food from the oceans, while the oceans cover about 70 per cent of the Earth's surface. The growth in global demand for seafood is amongst the strongest for food groups in the world at seven to 10 per cent per year. Both wild and farm-raised seafood have very low carbon profiles compared to other proteins. In fact, an expert report to the international High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Oceans Economy, to which Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is a signatory, said the sustainable expansion of seafood presents the largest potential carbon reduction for food production.

Fisheries and seafood farming in Canada are critical drivers for the health and vitality of coastal and Indigenous commu-

nities. Moreover, the Canadian fish and seafood sector has leading sustainable practices. Fisheries and Oceans Canada reports that 96 per cent of Canada's fish stocks are harvested at sustainable levels. Ninety-five per cent of all Canadian farmed salmon production is internationally sustainably certified. Our parents would consider those damn good marks. Still, despite this, the political assumption seems to be that the ocean and our fish stocks need special protection from us and other threats and pressures. We say we need to be proud and loud about our world-leading sustainable practices.

The federal government has committed to conserving 25 per cent of our waters by 2025 and 30 per cent by 2030. The latest proposals from interna-

tional negotiations appear even more ambitious. Fulfillment of these commitments could have significant impacts on ocean and freshwater fisheries and aquaculture activities and, if not done right, jeopardize meeting Canada's SDG goals and the realization of Indigenous and coastal community economic development.

We need to work together to find the win-win solution for marine biodiversity and sustainable seafood production. We can do better than just chasing a number. More legwork is needed to determine where more conservation effort is needed, to identify protection objectives and threats, and to select the best conservation measures that recognize the positive role of fisheries management and sustainable aquaculture production and consider the socio-economic implications.

If done right, we can realize true sustainable outcomes and drive the revitalization of coastal communities across Canada promised by a dynamic and innovative seafood sector.

We urge all stakeholders in the seafood industry to speak up and engage with decision makers on the topic of balancing biodiversity protection and marine conservation with economic prosperity. The Fisheries Council of Canada and Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance will continue to advocate for transparency and outcomes that maximize benefits for the environment, for local and Indigenous communities and for our producers.

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The Hill Times