

FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

NEWS

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I was proud to accept the responsibility given to me by Premier Pauline Marois when she appointed me as Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Moreover, like the premier, I sincerely believe that food is fundamental to our lives; this is so obvious that we sometimes forget how important agriculture is, and more particularly here, the fisheries.

The role of the commercial fisheries and aquaculture industry is all the more capital because it doesn't just occupy an essential place in the economy of the maritime regions, it also serves all regions of Québec. In fact, it provides more than 7,000 jobs and generates direct economic benefits that are estimated to exceed \$340 million. Thus, it contributes fully to the growth of Québec's biofood industry on the whole.

I know, beyond a doubt, that despite the often trying economic conditions of the past few years, all of you – fishers, processors, aquaculturers and other sector stakeholders – have never hesitated to commit the skills, talent and willingness you share to strengthen this fundamental pillar of our biofood industry.

It is crucial to make Québec's biofood and fisheries sectors a source of growing wealth and pride, able to provide a decent living for each and every one of its members. This is why the actions taken by our government will seek to support those who contribute daily to the growth of our biofood industry. By uniting

our efforts we can continue to offer Québec consumers healthy, varied food... food that is prepared, produced and harvested in a responsible manner.

Furthermore, I would like to point out that I will be supported in this task by my colleague, Jeannine Richard, MNA for the Magdalen Islands and parliamentary assistant for issues pertaining to the fisheries. Ms. Richard will be assisting me in my fisheries-related duties. Her experience will most certainly be an asset not only for the Ministry but also for the industry.

**Deputy Premier,
Minister of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Food**

François Gendron

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS: MEETINGS OF THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL OF FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE MINISTERS AND THE CANADIAN COUNCIL OF FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE MINISTERS

By François Montminy-Munyan,

Analyses and Policies Directorate

The Atlantic Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture Ministers (ACFAM) and the Canadian Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture Ministers (CCFAM) held their meetings on September 5 and 6, 2012 in Victoria, British Columbia.

Atlantic Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture Ministers

The ACFAM meeting appeared first on the two-day program. The agenda dealt with the electronic delivery of commercial fishing licences, and the development of a new provisional Fisheries and

Oceans Canada strategy in the wake of the Larocque decision¹. The ministers then participated in an in camera discussion session.

Canadian Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture Ministers

Two regulatory proposals prepared by the federal government were centre stage during the CCFAM meeting which then took place. The first seeks to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive aquatic species that threaten biodiversity and the integrity of aquatic

ecosystems. The second seeks to regulate the release of substances – notably medication and pesticides – into the aquatic environment from fish farming facilities. In both cases, Québec has regulatory powers and wishes to be consulted so as to gain a better understanding of the impact of these proposals.

Québec will host the ACFAM and CCFAM meetings in 2013. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food intends to take the opportunity to invite both Councils to more closely take into account the

priorities expressed by the governments of the provinces and territories, which to address industry needs better.

1. The Larocque Decision is a decision rendered by the Federal Court of Appeal in 2006 that deals with the attribution of fishing quotas to indemnify fishers for scientific research services they provide. The decision pointed out that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans could not allocate a fishing quota – a snow crab quota in this case – to finance scientific research work.

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FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE NEWS

LE GROUPE ALIMENTAIRE NORDIQUE INC. IMPROVES ITS FOOD SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

By Mathieu Dandurand,

Estuary and Inland Waters
Regional Directorate

Concerns about food safety are increasing and a growing number of major retail stores and food distribution chains call for or encourage the adoption of a quality and safety management system validated by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI).

The owner of Groupe alimentaire nordique inc., Gilles Ferron, and his sons Marco and Stéphane have decided to meet the challenge of adopting a new food safety management system. Specialising in fish and seafood processing as well as in the production of value-added prepared dishes, the company located in Sainte-Perpétue, in the Centre-du-Québec region, employs more than fifty people. It markets its prepared foods under the labels *Passion Bistro*, *Passion de la mer* and *Excel Sea Or*. It has chosen to use the Safe Quality Food (SQF) program, more specifically, Level 2 of the GFSI program's 2000 standard. The company is banking on this new certification to consolidate the relations it has built with its clientele and to continue entering new markets.

It is important to point out that GFSI is an independent not-for-profit foundation. Its members include food safety specialists as well as experts from other related fields who are active in the retail, food manufacturing and food services sectors throughout the world. As part of a harmonisation process and validation by the Foundation, a range of food safety management standards were analysed and any discrepancies with its own guidelines were identified.

The official certificate that will be issued to Groupe alimentaire nordique inc. will assure consumers and the company's clients that its products are prepared in compliance with high quality standards with an eye to ongoing improvement.

Although the 55,000-square-foot plant initially met HACCP quality management standards (associated with the *Food Safety Improvement Program*), major investments were needed to bring the plant up to a higher level, notably with respect to its ventilation and refrigeration systems. As part of these improvements, a computerised traceability system will be implemented as the work proceeds under the vigilant eye of the plant's manager, Sébastien Bouchard. The latter was delighted with the results of the various audits showing that the company had successfully met the challenge. Moreover, the firm's management team is proud of the efforts made by everyone involved in this project over the course of the past few months. The company expects to receive official confirmation that it has obtained Level 2, SQF 2000 certification this fall.

Because a notable number of aquatic products originating in Québec are used to prepare the foods it markets, Groupe alimentaire nordique qualified for funding via the *Financial support program for development of the commercial fisheries and aquaculture sector*. Consequently, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food granted the firm a non-refundable contribution that could reach \$140,000. Upon completion, the project must enable the company to improve the processing process it uses and assure food safety at a level that exceeds existing regulatory standards. The Ministry of Economic Development, Innovation and Export has also provided financial support to cover 40% of the eligible costs associated with honoraria paid out to consultants who accompanied the company in its efforts, analysed its needs and conducted the audits needed to carry out this project, which is likely to foster the company's expansion to markets outside Québec.



NORDIQUE
TRANSFORMATION D'ALIMENTS

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

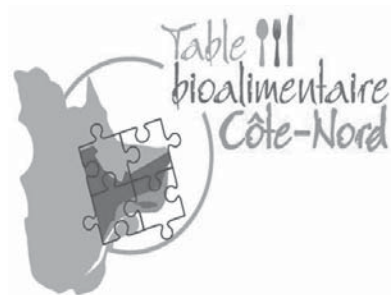
November 6 to 8, 2012

NORTH SHORE BIOFOOD FORUM

The 3rd North Shore Biofood Forum is a must-attend event for the regional biofood industry. The activity slated to take place in Baie-Comeau will focus on the theme, *Setting a course for knowledge*. It will bring together a range of North Shore stakeholders from the fields of agriculture, food processing, the fisheries and aquaculture. Speakers from throughout Québec and elsewhere will be discussing with participants about subjects of interest, notably innovation, northern agriculture, marine product processing plant modernisation, the recruitment of foreign workers, functional and health-enhancing foods as well as about food products associated with Aboriginal culture.

For information:

tablebcn@globetrotter.net



November 27 and 28, 2012

QUÉBEC OCEAN SCIENCE FORUM

The 11th Québec Ocean Science Forum will take place at the Maurice-Lamontagne Institute and will explore the theme, *The ecosystemic approach applied to marine resources*: Exploring the options. For the 250 participants from the maritime world who will attend, this meeting will be an opportunity to develop a common strategy designed to reach certain specific objectives regarding aquatic resource sustainability and marine ecosystem health while assuring the economic development of Québec's maritime sector.

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EXPANSION PROJECT FOR LA MOULE DU LARGE INC.

By Martha Bourgeois,

Magdalen Islands
Regional Directorate

Five years after it first opened its doors, La Moule du large inc., a company that farms blue mussels in open water off the Magdalen Islands, is expanding once again. In fact, between now and 2016 the company expects to increase the number of mussels it produces, moving from a production of 85,000 pounds in 2011 to 700,000 pounds beginning in 2016. It plans to reach this objective by gradually increasing the number of longlines it deploys and by using new collection sites.

Initially, the company's project came about in the wake of ongoing research done by the Magdalen Islands Mariculture Technology Centre (which is now a Merinov centre), affiliated with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Conducted in Baie de Plaisance in the late 1990s, these studies revealed the potential of this sector for mussel farming. This led to the company deploying its first collectors in the bay in the spring of 2008.

In the beginning, the company chose to organise its production using a mechanised socking method, which involved making and deploying seamless socks. This method, although interesting for mussel farmers at first glance, turned out to be less efficient for the company, which conducts its activities in open water where the sea is obviously rougher than in the lagoons. Given the ups and downs of nature, company managers reviewed their ways of doing things to make the most of the time spent on the water. Consequently, they

decided to choose the traditional socking method, basing their decision on the results of experiments conducted in tandem to their usual method the previous year which showed the advantages of the traditional socking method. To secure their spat supply – a key step in mussel farming – the company will be using several collection sites from now on.

The acquisition last December of a building located near the Pointe-Basse fishing harbour will allow the company to increase its work space and reach new objectives while remaining close to its farming site. The building, which has a great deal of potential, will first be used to prepare the socking and to house the holding tanks where mussels will be stored and treated prior to be sent on to markets. Since visiting potential Québec buyers in the fall of 2010, the company has been shipping its product directly to its preferred markets, thus keeping the number of middlemen as small as possible.

Via its *Financial support program for the development of the commercial fisheries and aquaculture sector*, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food offered the company a \$201,557 grant to carry out its expansion plan. This financial support will serve primarily to acquire equipment needed for the post-harvest treatment of mussels and the rearing material required to increase production. The company also received an amount of \$130,058 via the *Regional strategic intervention fund* managed by the Government of Québec.



Photo: Compliments of La Moule du large inc.

Christian Vigneau, owner of La Moule du large inc.

PROFESSIONALISATION OF SEAL HUNTERS

By Jean-Michel Poulin,

Analyses and Policies Directorate

For many years, repeated negative campaigns against the seal hunt have largely contributed to creating an erroneous perception of this activity in the eyes of the public. To improve the sector's image, the industry has implemented a range of initiatives, notably by setting up a system to recognise the professional skills of seal hunters. The effort currently underway seeks to introduce hunting standards and foster the recognition of the seal hunters' qualifications and experience.

The creation of a professionalisation and certification plan serves to substantiate the knowledge, competencies and skills that seal hunters must possess to be able to carry out all the tasks associated with the practice of their trade in an

efficient and vigilant manner. The professionalisation of a sector of activity is a complex operation that calls for the participation and commitment of everyone involved. Nevertheless, accomplishing this successfully could to some extent restore the legitimacy of this ancestral activity.

Working with the Canadian Council of Professional Fish Harvesters, the industry in Québec and its partners are helping to define the standards and profiles for seal hunters. A working group, coordinated by the Council, is working to support the entire Canadian industry in this task.

A first step involves institutionalising training on the three-step killing method (stun, check and bleed). Recognised by

various veterinary and scientific authorities, this method serves to kill the animal quickly and efficiently while keeping suffering to a minimum. When used correctly, it is no crueller than killing techniques used at commercial slaughterhouses. Many Québec hunters have taken this training session voluntarily in recent years; making it an official, recognised training session could only be of benefit for the industry's image.

It is important to point out that the seal hunt is a traditional activity practiced in coastal communities since people first settled in Québec and Canada. On the Magdalen Islands and Lower North Shore, communities earn their livelihood primarily by harvesting and processing

aquatic resources, including seal. The seal hunt offers fish harvesters extra income during the off season and in some cases, is a source of subsistence food supply.

The Government of Québec supports the creation of a professionalisation plan for sea hunters that will establish and enrich the skills unique to this trade, ensure that seals are killed humanely, and harmonise handling and processing techniques to guarantee the product's quality. The seal industry holds interesting economic development potential for coastal communities in Québec where, it is important to point out, all parts of the animal – skin, fat, meat and other parts – tend to be used.

FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE NEWS

ATLANTIC HALIBUT AND NORTHERN SHRIMP SHARES: THE REPORTS ARE NOW PUBLIC

By François Montminy-Munyan,

Analyses and Policies Directorate

On May 13, 2011, the Minister for Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Honourable Keith Ashfield, announced that he had mandated the firm Ernst & Young to conduct an external review of the Atlantic halibut fishery. This announcement came in the wake of a series of decisions made by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) in the spring of 2011 that modified the agreements defining Atlantic halibut fleet shares, to the detriment of the industry in Québec which was to obtain 57.7% of the quota allocated to inshore fishers.

It is important to point out that in 2007, DFO established regional Atlantic halibut shares for the inshore fleet as part of a process in which all the concerned fleets and the governments of Québec and the Atlantic Provinces took part. Access to Atlantic halibut stocks for fixed-gear fleets was determined by taking into account catch history for the 1986-to-2004 period, as shown in the following table.

FLEETS	HISTORIC SHARES
New Brunswick	5.17%
Nova Scotia	2.01%
Prince Edward Island	1.46%
Newfoundland and Labrador	32.03%
North Shore	8.24%
Gaspé Peninsula	44.03%
Magdalen Islands	5.44%
Scotia-Fundy	1.63%

This being said, in 2001, bowing to pressure from fishers in the Maritime Provinces and giving them greater access for fish stocks, DFO failed to respect the existing agreements, to the detriment of Québec and Newfoundland and Labrador. The overall share of Québec was unilaterally reduced to 50.8%, although later adjusted upward slightly to 51.2%. Québec nevertheless lost 6.5% of its Atlantic halibut share that year. In 2012, Québec's share was set at 54.7%, but it remains well below the level set out in the agreements based on catch history.

On June 21, 2011, Minister Ashfield gave Ernst & Young a new commission, this time to examine the application of management rules and policies in the northern shrimp fishery off the shores of Newfoundland and Labrador. In previous years, the allocated quota was reduced substantially, leading to the adoption of the "Last in First out" policy unique to this fishery. This decision notably led to the removal of one special shrimp allocation for Lower North Shore fishers affected by the collapse of the cod stocks.

In both cases, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food denounced these external examination procedures, contending that they were unnecessary. It felt that the existing rules simply needed to be respected so as to guarantee all participants and investors of the stability of supplies, essential to the ordered development of the fishing industry. The Ministry nevertheless informed Ernst & Young of its position in order to defend the interests of Québec and its own fishing industry.

On June 29, 2012, both Ernst & Young reports were made public and posted on the DFO website in its *Reports & Publications* section at <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/reports-rapports-eng.htm>. In the case of Atlantic halibut, the first report points out – in its conclusion – that under federal policy, the exclusive use of historical landings to calculate regional shares is common practice in the case of established fisheries. As for northern shrimp, the second report indicates that management rules were implemented correctly. However, both reports point to DFO shortcomings with respect to transparency and communication.

Although these external reviews confirmed the value of the rules established for both of these fisheries, we must remain vigilant to make sure these rules are respected. The Ministry intends to continue to press DFO to implement measures that will stabilise the harvest of stocks in all Gulf of St. Lawrence fisheries. An initiative of this nature would be a practical step towards the true "modernisation" of the industry.

FISH SOUP: A PRODUCT THAT DESERVES PROMOTION!

By Julie Boyer,

Gaspé Peninsula
Regional Directorate

Brown bullhead, channel catfish, white sucker, shorthead redhorse and crayfish: these are all freshwater species that fish harvesters often return to the water. The lack of markets explains why large volumes of fish, which are allowed to be caught, are not harvested.

Roger Michaud, president of the Association des pêcheurs commerciaux du lac Saint-Pierre (APCLSP), and Jean-Marie Boucher, president of the Fédération des pêcheurs commerciaux d'eau douce du Québec, would like to see this situation change. They are banking on the creation of new products, such as smoked fish, soups and delicatessen products, to valorise Québec's freshwater species.

To this end, the APCLSP has undertaken a project that involves developing a hearty soup using brown bullhead filets. Claude Lemire, who heads up the Fédération, invited Chef Louise Guoin, owner of the restaurant La Pasta in

Nicolet, to participate. Together, they collected the best fish soup recipes from throughout Centre-du-Québec, the Maskinongé region and the Sorel islands. Week after week, Guoin tested these recipes, preparing the fish in a variety of ways – with vegetables, cream, lentils, etc. A group of 10 tasters, brought together by Lemire and Rosa Galego, of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, sampled 24 soups and gave their opinions. The best soup recipe was then adapted and optimised to come up with the ideal formulation for production purposes.

Next, the APCLSP called on an expert in heat treatment, Benoit Turgeon, of the firm Developex. Turgeon has already worked with a number of companies in the fisheries sector. Sensors and software in hand, this expert defined the product's sterilisation range. The heat treatment that will be used aims to make sure the product has an extended shelf life at room temperature. In the coming days, the Association will carry out a trial production to prepare samples that will be given to potential clients.



Brown bullhead fishing in Lac Saint-Pierre

Thereafter, the Association will join forces with the region's local development centres to present a turnkey product, together with a nutritional information sheet, to various potential manufacturers. It hopes to find and interest a processing firm that will be willing to launch this fish soup on the market.

For the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food – the project's financial partner – and for fish harvesters, increasing the landings and valorisation of under-utilised stocks would be excellent news in the current context of falling catches for traditional and lucrative freshwater species.