

FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

NEWS

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Eco-certification, identification and traceability have become essential elements on the world's principal fish and seafood markets. Our industry clearly understands this new reality and readily adjusts to meet these evolving requirements so as to maintain and expand its outlets here in Québec and elsewhere. As a result, nearly half of Québec's fish and seafood products enjoy Marine Stewardship Council certification.

The 2013-2018 Action Plan. Building our commercial fisheries and aquaculture industry implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and the

Politique de souveraineté alimentaire (food sovereignty policy) both encourage such efforts, which have become essential to the growth and future of our biofood industry. These efforts are also indicative of the government's willingness to make sure that Québec products occupy a larger place on domestic and foreign markets.

In this regard, the Québec lobster identification project initiated a few years ago by our fishing industry is a fine example. The project, slated to continue in 2014, should make it possible to promote all the live lobster caught in Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands waters and sold on the domestic market. This is an excellent way to foster the outreach of Québec food products.

There are also other opportunities to step up and diversify export activities. Examples include major annual gatherings such as the International Boston Seafood Show in the United States, the European Seafood Exhibition on the European stage and the Asian

Seafood Exhibition in the Asia Pacific arena. These huge, international trade shows are fine occasions to further promote the excellence of Québec's fish and seafood and the know-how of our industry on markets that are ever-more vast and profitable. You are key ambassadors and the Government of Québec will continue to support your initiatives.

In closing, and in anticipation of the upcoming fishing season, I would like to reiterate my wish to see all industry actors work together to build a prosperous, remunerative and job-generating bio-food sector in the maritime regions of Québec.

François Gendron
Deputy Premier,
Minister of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Food

THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION DECISION ON THE EU SEAL PRODUCTS BAN

By Jean-Michel Poulin
and Meggie Desnoyers,

Fisheries and Aquaculture Policies
and Analyses Directorate

Last November 25, a special World Trade Organization (WTO) panel mandated to rule on various commercial disputes between Organization members announced its decision regarding the adoption by the European Union (EU) of measures prohibiting the import of seal products. This matter was heard by the international organisation following a complaint submitted by Canada and Norway. The dispute settlement panel specifically examines trade disputes between States that have signed WTO treaties.

Canada alleged that the EU regulatory regime on seal products contravened various EU obligations pursuant to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), 1994 and the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT). Although the EU was criticised for acting inconsistently in imposing the ban, the WTO recognised that the EU prohibition seeking to allay public moral concerns was a legitimate objective. For the EU, this confirms the compatibility of its regime with its international obligations.

Consequently, the federal government decided to appeal the decision rendered by the special WTO panel. The Government of Québec also believes that the special panel's decision goes against the interests of the seal hunting industry in

Québec and could lead to increased trade barriers in the name of public morals.

The seal hunt is an ancestral activity in which not only communities on the Magdalen Islands and the Lower North Shore but also several Aboriginal communities have participated for hundreds of years. It notably contributes to their economic development. This hunt is essential to these communities since it is a source of abundant food and furthermore, brings in supplementary income for numerous commercial fish harvesters during their off-season.

It is also important to point out that the seal hunt is a sustainable activity, that it is strictly regulated and that it complies with animal welfare criteria. Hunters must complete a mandatory training

course before they are allowed to practise this activity. Moreover, the traditional method used to kill the seals with a hakapik has been recognised by various veterinary and scientific bodies as being a quick and effective technique that is no crueller than the methods used in commercial slaughterhouses. In addition, the seal pup hunt was abandoned in 1987 and the seal population has nearly tripled since 1970.

The harvest of this marine resource is founded on making the best use of an abundant regional stock, and is of benefit to Québec's maritime communities. For this reason, the Government of Québec continues to support the seal hunt industry.

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Québec 

MAGDALEN ISLANDS MARICULTURE AND FISHERIES GATHERING – FIFTH EDITION

By Karine Villemare,

Magdalen Islands Regional
Directorate

The fifth edition of the *Rendez-vous de l'industrie des pêches et de la mariculture des Îles-de-la-Madeleine* took place on December 10. More than a hundred fish harvesters, assistant fishers, mariculturiers, food processors, association representatives, specialists and industry partners got together to discuss the sector's various issues. Inspired by the theme *Mieux connaître pour mieux agir (Enhanced understanding for enhanced action)*, the day was an opportunity to discuss – within the framework of presentations – a good number of subjects specific to the Islands.

ENHANCED UNDERSTANDING OF THE SECTOR

By way of introduction, an annual media review entitled *12 months in 12 minutes* was shared by Gabrielle Landry, of the community development team at the Municipalité des Îles-de-la-Madeleine. Then, reports on the fishing and mariculture seasons were presented by Cédric Arseneau, of Fisheries and Oceans Canada and François Bourque, of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPAQ). Over the years, these reports have become essential for taking stock of the past year's highlights.

ENHANCED UNDERSTANDING OF THE ECONOMIC SITUATION

With respect to the local economy, Frédéric Lessard, a Fisheries and Oceans Canada economist, spoke about the process used to complete a study on the economic benefits of the fisheries and aquaculture sector on the Magdalen Island (*Étude sur les retombées économiques du secteur des pêches et de l'aquaculture aux Îles-de-la-Madeleine*). A final report will be presented in March. It is eagerly awaited since it will provide a current portrait of what this sector represents for the Islands in socio-economic terms.

An economist at the Université de Moncton, Pierre-Marcel Desjardins described the national and international repercussions of the economic context on the industry. Although the recession is over, recovery is weak and growth remains fragile according to Desjardins. He presented the highlights of the report prepared by the Maritime Lobster Panel and its main recommendations in terms of lobster quality on markets, the creation of an independent maritime institute that would collect and produce information about the lobster market, the implementation of a generic promotional campaign, and the introduction of a mechanism to establish prices. Next, the issue of the Canada – European Union Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) and its impact on the commercial fisheries and aquaculture industry was discussed.



Photo: Marinel LeBlanc, L'île magnifique

More than one hundred participants from the fisheries and mariculture sector gathered to discuss various issues.

ENHANCED UNDERSTANDING OF THE SEABED

Richard Larocque, a scientist and specialist in underwater imagery at the Maurice Lamontagne Institute, presented a study on the characterisation of the seabed in Baie de Plaisance (*Caractérisation des fonds marins: portrait de la baie de Plaisance*). Although conducted a few years ago, this study had not yet been brought to the sector's attention. The characterisation of Baie de Plaisance by means of optical imagery served to show the biodiversity present in this exceptional marine environment.

ENHANCED UNDERSTANDING OF OPPORTUNITIES

Thibault Durbecq, project manager at the Centre de recherche sur les milieux insulaires et maritimes, and Robert Robitaille, a MAPAQ agronomist, spoke about the possibility of valorising fisheries waste. Whether for animal feed, the manufacturing of liming supplements for agriculture or the preparation of crustacean-based compost, there are numerous opportunities. It will be interesting to keep an eye on future developments in this regard.

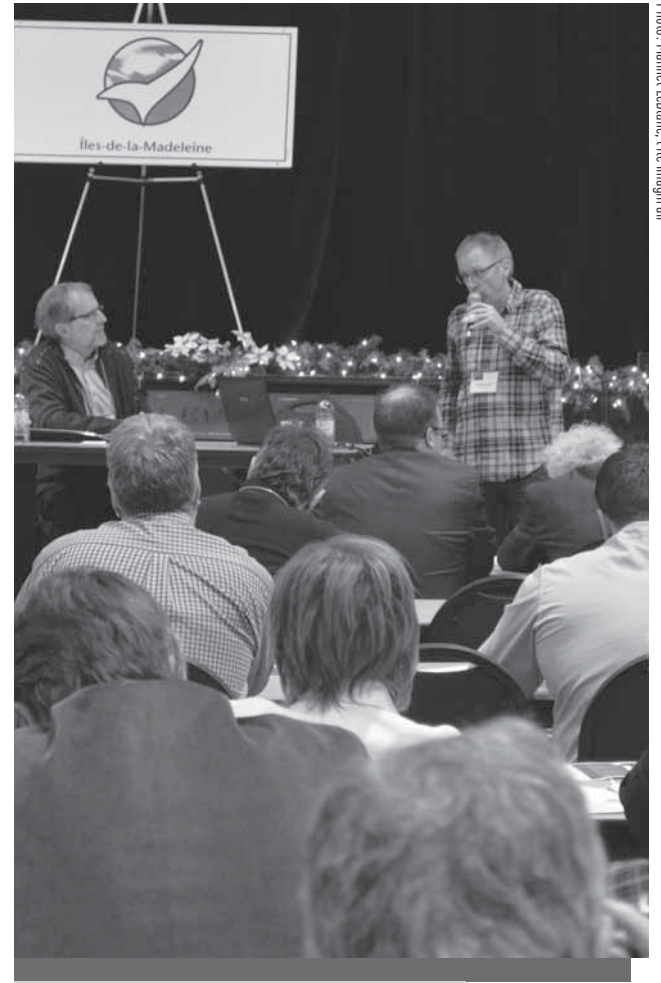


Photo: Marinel LeBlanc, L'île magnifique

The mariculture report was presented by the MAPAQ's François Bourque (on the left in the photo).

ENHANCED ACTION

Throughout the day, the meeting organisers took the opportunity to ask participants about their action priorities. In what areas does the industry have to take action? How? And with whom? This served to identify some areas for priority action in the coming years within the fisheries and mariculture industry on the Islands.

At the end of the day, Philippe Mollé, chef and food columnist, called for creativity and networking, while pointing out the importance of food appellations. He reminded the industry that it had become imperative to identify products as coming from the Magdalen Islands.

It is important to point out that this fifth edition of the industry gathering was organised by the Magdalen Islands fisheries and mariculture table (*Table pêche et mariculture des Îles-de-la-Madeleine*) – an entity created by the municipality. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food provided financial support for the activity, which once again was a tremendous success!

SEMINARS ON THE IDENTIFICATION, TRACEABILITY AND ECO-CERTIFICATION OF FISH AND SEAFOOD

By **Françoise Nicol,**

Fisheries and Aquaculture Analyses
and Policies Directorate

At the annual fisheries and aquaculture gathering on the Magdalen Islands (*Rendez-vous annuel de la pêche et de la mariculture aux Îles-de-la-Madeleine*), held on December 11, 2013, the maritime fisheries table, Québec mariculture table and Québec freshwater aquaculture network table, working with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPAQ), organised a seminar on the theme *Identification, traceability and eco-certification: The new market reality*.

Together with Jeannine Richard, MNA for Îles-de-la-Madeleine, and Aziz Niang, Assistant Deputy Minister for Commercial Fisheries and Aquaculture at MAPAQ, some fifty participants – notably, fish harvesters, aquaculturers, food processors and sector partners – attended the meeting. Guy Auclair and Howard Powles were the guest speakers and respectively spoke about the challenges and issues associated with the

establishment of identification and traceability systems and about the eco-certification of fisheries and aquaculture products.

Also, the seminar served to bring together fisheries and aquaculture stakeholders to inform them about the tools available to them to facilitate decision-making or to implement projects involving identification, eco-certification or traceability. In this way, each link in the industry will be able to more readily seize opportunities that arise as a result of current consumer trends and the growing demand for products derived from eco-responsible activities.

The seminar was held a second time, in Gaspé, on February 12 and in the coming months will be offered on the North Shore and in Central Québec. Judging by the number of participants to date and the questions they asked, the upcoming seminars are likely to draw numerous attendees.



Photo: Collaboration Robert Nicolas

Guy Auclair, invited speaker, spoke about the challenges and issues associated with the establishment of identification and traceability systems.

It is important to point out that the organisation of this seminar is one of the actions set out in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's *2013-2018 Action Plan* for the development of

the commercial fisheries and aquaculture industry.

PORTRAIT OF THE BENTHIC FAUNA AT FUTURE MUSSEL FARMING SITES ON THE MAGDALEN ISLANDS

By **Julie Boyer,**

Gaspé Peninsula Regional
Directorate

Mussel, scallop and oyster farming can have an impact on the seabed environment. These filtering organisms feed on plankton and other particles in the water column, some of which is used while the remainder is ejected as waste. This waste builds up on the seabed and can lead to a localised accumulation of organic matter. However, the extent of organic enrichment generated by aquaculture activities depends on numerous factors, including the size of the marine farm, the species cultivated, the current and the seabed.

A certain number of studies have shown that mussel farming could have a positive effect on the ecosystem's productivity. In fact, more finfish and invertebrates such as lobster and crabs have been observed beneath and near artificial reefs and mussel farms in confined settings around Prince Edward Island and the Magdalen Islands.

In 2007, mussel farming leases were issued for open-water sites in Baie de Plaisance, off the Magdalen Islands. Studies were done in 2007 and 2008 as the mariculture farms were being

established to characterise the benthic fauna in the area covered by the leases and at some nearby control sites. At present, only one producer has a facility in open water and he occupies nearly the entire site. New promoters have also expressed their interest in conducting activities in the sector. This is the context that led two researchers, Philippe Archambault of the Institut des sciences de la mer in Rimouski and Madeleine Nadeau of the Merinov Centre, to conduct a temporal monitoring study in 2011 and 2012 at the existing mussel farming site and at the control sites analysed in 2007 and 2008. They also described the initial condition of another site in Baie de Plaisance that could be used for mussel farming. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food provided financial support for their initiative.

THE RESULTS OF THE OPEN-WATER STUDY

The study on the benthic fauna at the existing mussel farming site and the four control sites (including one site where a new mussel farm might eventually be established) had two components, one to characterise the sediment

and the fauna inhabiting the sediment (sampling was done using a bucket) and the other to characterise the fauna inhabiting the surface of the seabed (sampling was done by divers).

The monitoring showed that there were no differences over time attributable to the establishment of the mussel farm four years earlier, nor were there any differences between the mussel farming site and the control sites. In all, 217 species inhabiting the sediment were recorded at the sites on the whole; of these, a tiny bivalve – *Nucula delphinodonta* – accounted for 43 percent of the organisms recorded. The rock crab, lobster and whelk – harvested commercially in the Gulf of St. Lawrence – were among the 25 surface-dwelling species identified.

This study draws a comprehensive portrait of the benthic community in the study area and shows that mussel farming in open water in Baie de Plaisance does not have a significant impact on the benthic fauna.

A new project exploring the sustainable development of shellfish farming in open water around the Magdalen Islands, its production potential and interactions with commercial fishing (*Développement durable de la conchyli-*

culture en milieu ouvert aux Îles-de-la-Madeleine: potentiel de production et interactions avec la pêche commerciale) got underway in August 2013, led by Dr. Chris McKindsey, a scientist at the Maurice Lamontagne Institute. The partners for this project are Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Merinov Centre, Société de développement de l'industrie maricole, Institut des sciences de la mer in Rimouski – which is affiliated with the Université du Québec à Rimouski, the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi and the Ressources aquatiques Québec network. The goal of the project is to determine the production support capacity and ecological support capacity for mussel farming at the mariculture site in Baie de Plaisance. It also seeks to evaluate the usefulness of geochemical indicators for monitoring the quality of a site in use and to determine the impact of mussel farming activities on the abundance, growth and movement of three commercial species, the lobster, rock crab and winter flounder.

The data gathered during the course of these studies will provide valuable insight and facilitate decision-making on production strategies and aquaculture site management from a perspective of sustainable development of the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

2014 TRADE EVENTS SCHEDULE

March 4, 5, 6 and 7	March 16, 17 and 18	April 2, 3 and 4	May 6, 7 and 8	November 5, 6 and 7
FOODEX JAPAN	INTERNATIONAL BOSTON SEAFOOD SHOW	SIAL CANADA	EUROPEAN SEAFOOD EXHIBITION	CHINA FISHERIES & SEAFOOD EXPO
Tokyo, Japan www3.jma.or.jp/foodex/en/	Boston, United States www.seafoodexpo.com	Montréal, Canada www.sialcanada.com	Brussels, Belgium www.euroseafood.com	Quindao, China www.chinaseafoodexpo.com

NEW SOURCE OF INFORMATION ABOUT SEAWEED AVAILABLE TO THE INDUSTRY

By Julie Boyer,

Gaspé Peninsula Regional
Directorate

Given its 3,000 km of coastline and great biodiversity, one can well imagine that the inventory of seaweed available in Québec is neither up-to-date nor complete. Development of the seaweed industry nevertheless calls for thorough knowledge of the existing biomass. Fortunately, the pertinent information is available, albeit in various disparate reports prepared by researchers, ministries, departments and organisations, and perhaps not yet published. Moreover, some enterprises are fully aware of the seaweed beds in their respective regions as are the many divers who visit them.

Updating knowledge about the locations of seaweed beds is one of the main objectives of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) Industrial Research Chair for Colleges in the Conversion of Marine Macroalgae. The Chair, Merinov Centre, the St. Lawrence Global Observatory and the Technopole maritime du Québec have pooled their efforts to concentrate this valuable information in a single place and thus, facilitate innovation and industry development.

For instance, researcher Anissa Merzouk and the research chair team have gathered unpublished data as well as

information available in the literature. A dozen marine ecology investigators from eastern Canada have provided them with data on the distribution and composition of brown seaweed beds and the presence of red and green seaweed along the shores of the St. Lawrence River, Estuary and Gulf as well as around Nunavik. Six divers and scuba diving associations have also shared their observations.

Meanwhile, computer specialist Keven Ratté and his colleagues at the St. Lawrence Global Observatory developed a Web tool that can be used to enter, manage and make the most of data on the algal biomass in Québec. This tool can be used by various authorised users – such as enterprises, researchers, organisations, ministries and departments – to enter and consult data.

More general information on the distribution of seaweed species will soon be available to the general public. To consult this new information data base, users will have to access the Biodiversity data application at the St. Lawrence Global Observatory website at <http://ogsl.ca/bio>.

It is important to point out that this initiative is financed jointly by the

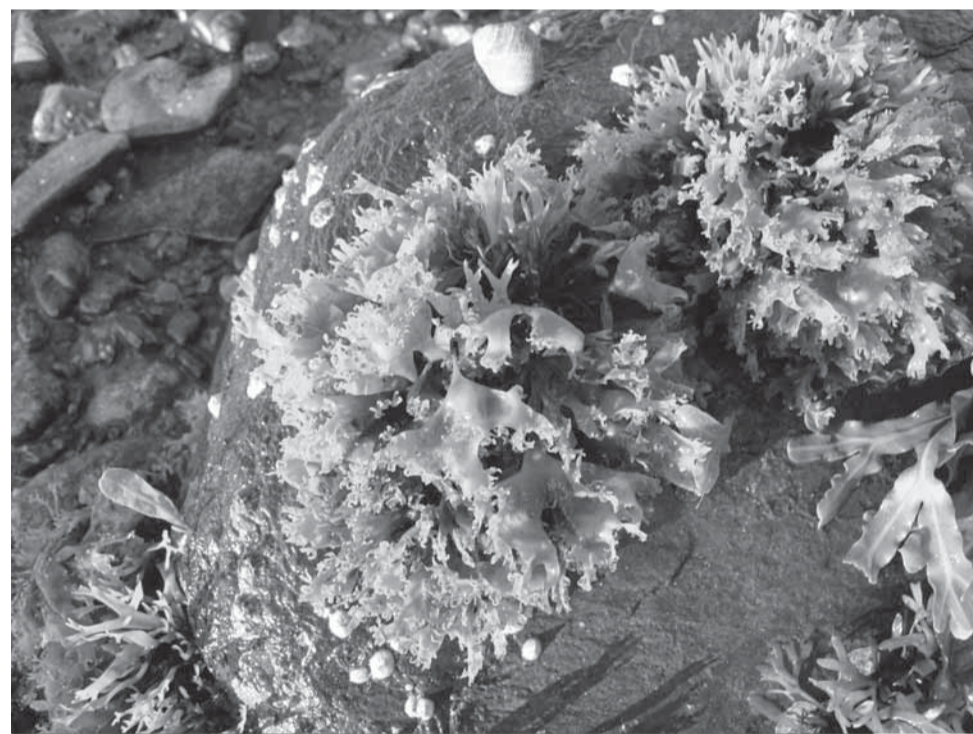


Photo: Daniel Bourdages, Merinov

Chondrus crispus

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Industry Canada, the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada and the Technopole maritime du Québec.

For more information about the application described above, please contact Claude Tremblay, General Manager of the St. Lawrence Global Observatory (SLGO) (tremblayc@ogsl.ca). To be able to

use the data base entry and management tool, please contact Éric Tamineaux, holder of the Industrial Research Chair for Colleges in the Conversion of Marine Macroalgae at the Merinov Centre (ETamineaux@cegepgim.ca).