

INTEGRATED MULTI-TROPHIC AQUACULTURE ON THE MOVE

IMTA regulations take a step forward

The regulatory acceptability of integrated multi-trophic aquaculture (IMTA) took another step forward this spring with changes to the Canadian Shellfish Sanitation Program.

The 1995 version of the Canadian Shellfish Sanitation Program (CSSP) prohibited the development of IMTA in Canada, as Section 2 (“Polyculture”) of Chapter 12 (“Shellfish Aquaculture”) stipulated that “There should be a minimum of a 125 m prohibited area surrounding netpens.”

Since 2001 Thierry Chopin and associates in New Brunswick have accumulated significant amounts of data in support of a closer working relationship between finfish and shellfish production and in 2004, the group organized a workshop entitled “Defining the appropriate regulatory and policy framework for the development of integrated multi-trophic aquaculture practices.”

The goal of the meeting was to identify the challenges that have to be addressed with respect to information and regulations regarding this practice. The workshop identified the work needed to allow the development of IMTA at the environmental, economic and societal levels, and what regulations and policies needed to be amended and how.

Four years of discussions with the different agencies involved followed, and the CSSP was finally amended on May 14, 2008. Section 2 (“Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture”) of Chapter 12 now indicates that “For the purpose of the CSSP, IMTA refers to the raising of shellfish and finfish within a 125 m radius of one another in the marine environment.”

After amending the plan for shellfish the IMTA proponents intend to work on amendments for seaweeds, sea urchins, sea cucumbers, etc.