



food systems for a healthier world

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Testimony – Michigan House Agriculture Committee (February 3, 2016)
Support for HB5166

Chairman Lauwers and Members of the Committee,

I'm Joe Colyn with the agri-food consultancy Originz, LLC out of Battle Creek where we help clients deliver "**food systems for a healthier world**". Notice that in our tagline we use the comparative adjective "**healthier**". We are never satisfied with the status quo. We believe and act from the position that mankind (society) can best care for creation (the environment) when our economy thrives, and that those interests can be complimentary rather than competitive. We envision a world that's not only sustainable, but one that thrives!

I support the tack that HB 5166 takes to addressing the advance of aquaculture in the state. It updates the regulatory framework, levels the playing field and provides for a measured and responsible advance of the sector in a manner that agree with the recommendation of the Sea Grant Integrated Assessment¹: the mission to "**Grow aquaculture sustainably into a major industry sector by 2025 that complements our natural resource conservation and recreation uses of water**". This approach does not compromise the Public Trust; rather it gives balanced consideration to the economic and societal needs of the public for healthy food, jobs, and thriving waterfront communities.

Other bills that have been proposed that would ban net pen or all aquaculture. I suggest that they serve no purpose other than needlessly obstructing opportunity. I applaud those that have sponsored HB 5166, as the amendments to the ADA advance a sound regulatory framework that protects the interests of all Michigan citizens while allowing aquaculture to develop.

As a co-author of the Integrated Assessment report that outlines the opportunity for aquaculture in the region that I referenced above, let me restate one of our key recommendations, that "**the preferred future is expected to include all three (production) systems (recirculating aquaculture, flow through, open water cage (net pen) systems) and research will likely identify variants as well as new designs**". Let's allow the entrepreneurial community and talented farming, fishing, engineer and biologist we have in Michigan to explore what the aquaculture sector **CAN** be – including net pens –so we can produce fresh, local, healthy and affordable seafood for the states citizens right here in Michigan.

The conversation in Michigan needs to move beyond nay-saying rhetoric to "opportunity thinking" and a regulatory framework that allows us collectively to advance the sector. HB

¹ Full text of the Integrated Assessment is online at www.originz.com/aquaculture

5166 allow for that. This is the better way forward. And I urged those on the Committee that have considered supporting the bans to rather get behind HB 5166.

The Science Advisory Panel's report to the Quality of Life agencies makes it clear that there is an opportunity to develop net pen aquaculture in the Great Lakes when such facilities are properly sited and when an adaptive management and BACI approach is taken to their operation to ensure sustainability. HB 5166 affords a sound regulatory framework within which the sector can site and operate to realize the opportunity.

We know from the experience in Ontario that net pen aquaculture can be done sustainably. In fact the sector has expanded considerably in recent years through both increased feed allocation to existing farms and by expansion of First Nations operations in Lake Huron's north channel and its connected waters. Best estimates of current production in Ontario show about 8000 t/yr of trout from their net pen farms. This is up from about 3500 t/yr a decade ago. Most of the sector growth has occurred with First Nations controlled sites and enterprises – primarily because market demand for the fish has increased faster than the provincial regulatory and permitting process has allowed. The enterprising farmers are astute enough to realize that if one regulatory framework is not working, they can, in the Ontario situation, go an alternate route partnering with the First Nations. And it's been my observation that this does not result in short-cuts or any disregard for environmental stewardship – they are after all farmers, who know that stewardship of the water resources are key to sustainability. My observation, and yes, I've actually been there to observe, is that they operate so well that they draw little attention to themselves – when all is well, no-one is concerned. In fact the sector has been a major contributor of jobs and community wellbeing in the First Nations.

I urge members of the House Ag Committee – go visit the Ontario farms. And I'm offering my services to help coordinate a trip. I suggest that we invite those opposed to development as well. Sometimes you just have to see how best practices are done to appreciate the reality. When you do visit, you'll understand how an integrated aquaculture sector not only make an economic contribution to society, but also how they provide ecological services in the restoration of depleted water ecosystems. And check out the www.originz.com/aquaculture website for a series of videos on the opportunity. Be sure to watch the Kana Upton and Ben Kanasawe clips – personal stories that touch on the wider benefits of developing aquaculture.

What if we could produce all the fish we eat in Michigan in Michigan?

Thanks you for your work to advance HB 5166 and the creation a sound framework for a thriving Michigan aquaculture sector and *"a healthier world"*.

Joe Colyn -- Originz, LLC



food systems for a healthier world

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AQUACULTURE

Over the next three decades, the world's resources will be shared by 9 billion people. Aquaculture presents a great opportunity to contribute to the growing meat-protein of a larger and more affluent civilization.

Commercial fish farming is a young sector in the realm of animal agriculture. Only in this decade has aquaculture overtaken the global wild-capture fishery in seafood output and will continue to expand as demand for seafood grows.

Originz, based in the Great Lakes Region, is committed to helping the aquaculture sector grow in the region, which has over 20% of the world's freshwater.

ORIGINZ work in support of Aquaculture:

A series of *eight brief videos* inform us about the aquaculture opportunity and how best practices are being used to ensure that fish farming is done sustainably by farmers who act as stewards of natural resources while putting fresh, affordable, and healthy seafood on the table.

In 2014, we partnered with a broad range of stakeholders and developed "[A Strategic Plan for a Thriving & Sustainable Michigan Aquaculture](#)"

The regulatory framework for aquaculture development is multifaceted and entrepreneurs interested in developing fish farming enterprise need tools to guide them through regulation. In 2012 we created a "[Roadmap Through Regulation](#)" for Michigan Aquaculture"

We continue to assist various farms expand their role in aquaculture and are engaged in guiding others through regulations.

See the individual videos located to the right.



[A Call to Action](#)



[Overview of Aquaculture](#)



[Who Benefits](#)



[What are the Challenges](#)



[Learning from Ontario](#)



[Kana Upton](#)



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