

FISHERIES & AQUACULTURE

NEWS

PUBLISHED BY

The Commercial Fisheries and Aquaculture Branch
and the Communications Directorate of the ministère
de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation

200, chemin Sainte-Foy, Québec (Québec) G1R 4X6
www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca

Coordination team: Denis Desrosiers, Mélissa Lapointe,
Jean Lavallée, Thierry Marcoux, Nathalie Moisan, Rabia Siga Sow,
Karine Villemaire.

FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE NEWS
is published bimonthly as an insert in Pêche Impact.

2

Programme de revitalisation
des parcs maricoles 2019-2022
[2019-2022 Mariculture Park Revitalization Program]

Happy Retirement Denis Lacerte!

3

Commercial Fisheries and Aquaculture:
Continuation of MAPAQ Activities

COVID-19: Protective Measures
for Fishery Workers

4

Québec and Canada Support
UMEK Group Plant Modernization

Mr. André Lamontagne, Ministre de l'Agriculture, des
Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation, Visits the North Shore

You only have to look at the colour of the leaves to see that summer is already coming to an end. Concerns and questions marked the beginning of the fishing season, but the preliminary results are encouraging: fishers and processors can be satisfied with their achievements, despite the very unique context that will have set the pace for 2020. The time has already come to take a look back and discussions about the preparation of the next fishing season will begin shortly.

The commercial fishing and aquaculture sector will also have benefited from the consumer response to the Premier's call to buy local, as evidenced by the enthusiasm of Quebecers for local lobster. Like you, I am delighted with this success and I am pleased to reiterate my government's continued commitment to work to strengthen Québec's food self-sufficiency. This necessity is highlighted by the collateral impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Trust that I will ensure that your sector takes its rightful place in this movement.

I also had the pleasure of reaching out to those who work hard to allow us to relish our local fish and seafood during my recent visits to the North Shore and the Lower St. Lawrence. Those of the last few months, particularly in Gaspésie and Îles-de-la-Madeleine, are also included. These visits provide an opportunity to discuss the challenges you face in your work and also to remind you of the importance the government places on the development of your industry. On each occasion, I am delighted to see that the sector's stakeholders continue to explore new and innovative opportunities and invest to ensure the sustainable development of their activities.

I announced several projects this summer with the Fonds des pêches du Québec or through the Department's programs to complement federal funding for the adoption of clean technologies in fisheries

and aquaculture. We have renewed and enhanced all of the programs since we took office. My Department supports your initiatives, which is all the more important in a time of economic recovery such as the one we are currently experiencing. I remain committed to listening to you, understanding your issues and putting the necessary energy into a sustainable commercial fisheries and aquaculture sector that is firmly rooted in your reality.

I wish you a great fall.



Minister of Agriculture,
Fisheries, and Food

ANDRÉ LAMONTAGNE

AN OVERVIEW OF COVID-19'S IMPACT ON FISH AND SEAFOOD EXPORTS IN QUÉBEC

By **Michel Bélanger**,
from the Direction des analyses et des
politiques des pêches et de l'aquaculture

The COVID-19 crisis has not spared the global fish and seafood industry. The sector has been forced to change its ways and must continue to adapt to this new reality. Although it is too early to assess the impact on the industry in Québec, monitoring trade can provide some insight into the situation. At the time this article was written, the tracking tools used by MAPAQ made it possible to obtain the value of exports over the first six months of 2020.

A comparison of Québec's fish and seafood exports between the years 2020 and 2019, for the months of January to June, shows the effect of the pandemic on trade. For the first six months of the year, there was a 27.8% decrease in the value of exports and a 22.5% decrease in quantity compared to last year. That difference is more pronounced in the months of April, May and June, with a respective \$14 million, \$27 million and \$29 million decrease in trade

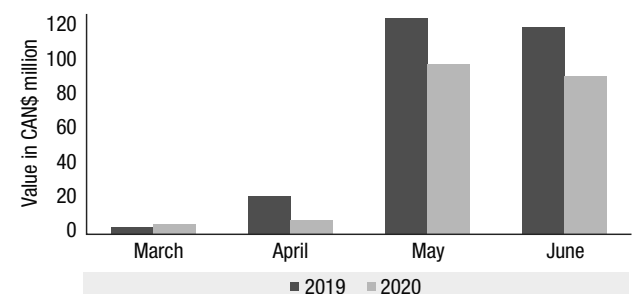
value. Although there were delays in some fisheries this year, this period represents a large part of the commercial fishing season in Québec.

Surprisingly, the value and quantity of exports were higher in March 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. This increase is mainly due to a higher quantity of shrimp exported to Denmark compared to last year.

Québec's imports also decreased during the pandemic, but to a lesser extent than its exports. For the first six months of 2020, the value of imports decreased by \$26 million compared to 2019. This corresponds to an 8.9% decrease in value compared to last year.

The decline in Québec's fish and seafood exports can be explained by a reduction in international demand, an increase in domestic trade or a delay in trade with Québec's trading partners. In 2019, the first six months of the year accounted for 67% of the value of trade for the year. An analysis of trade taking place over the next few months will provide a better picture of the changes in the Québec fish and seafood industry in the context of the pandemic.

Tracking the value of Québec's fish and seafood exports during the COVID-19 pandemic



**PROGRAMME DE
REVITALISATION
DES PARCS
MARICOLES
2019-2022**
[2019-2022 MARICULTURE
PARK REVITALIZATION
PROGRAM]

By Omar Sarr,
from the Direction des analyses et des
politiques des pêches et de l'aquaculture

This past June 18, the ministre de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation announced the implementation of the 2019-2022 Mariculture Park Revitalization Program.

The start of this program is part of the 2018-2025 Ministerial Action Plan for the Mariculture Industry, in the 2018-2025 Ministerial Action Plan for the Commercial Fishing and Aquaculture Industry in Québec as well as the 2018-2025 Bio-food Policy - Feeding our World.

As a reminder, one of the objectives set out as agreed with the industry, as part of the 2018-2025 Ministerial Action Plan for the Fishing and Aquaculture Industry, is doubling mariculture industry production between 2018 and 2025.

Developed in collaboration with seafood farmers, the 2019-2022 Mariculture Park Revitalization Program will help to reach this goal. It will also enable seafood farmers to make a greater, significant and sustainable contribution to the bio-food industry and development of Québec's coastal regions. As such, the program will support mariculture businesses that wish to update their structures and equipment that are in poor operating condition in order to diversify and increase their production.

Mariculture structures eligible for upgrade using the assistance offered through this program are offshore longlines and their related components such as ropes, buoys and anchors. As for mariculture equipment, this means equipment used in production and primary processing of mariculture products, including pumping systems, debysers, declumpers, socking machines and graders. The program does not include buildings, boats or vehicles.

MAPAQ is able to provide financial assistance up to \$150,000 per company for the duration of the program. For businesses located on the Îles-de-la-Madeleine, assistance is increased by 10% to take into account the consequences of insularity, in accordance with Order in Council 354-2016 concerning recognition by the Government of Québec of the special status related to the insular nature and structural constraints inherent to the agglomeration of the Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

For information on the program: www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/programme-parcsmaricoles

**HAPPY
RETIREMENT
DENIS LACERTE!**

By Nathalie Moisan,
From the Direction régionale de l'estuaire
et des eaux intérieures

Denis Lacerte's long and rich career at MAPAQ has drawn to a close, but he will leave many a mark in his wake! Having started his MAPAQ career in Sept-Îles as a professional, later becoming regional director in the 1990s, Denis moved to Québec City where he capped his career as Director of the Direction régionale de l'estuaire et des eaux intérieures.

Denis has greatly contributed to the development and competitiveness of the fisheries and aquaculture sector in Québec. He notably collaborated on revising the law and the regulations on commercial aquaculture, implemented the Strategy for the Sustainable Development of Freshwater Aquaculture in Québec and contributed to updating financial support programs for the development of the fisheries and aquaculture sector and financial support for fishing companies. Recently, in response to the urgency of the situation, he designed a new assistance program for fish farmers experiencing difficulties due to the pandemic. In addition to this major work, he has always been very generous with his time



and attentive to the clients who have been able to benefit from his advice. In addition, the latter appreciated his desire to make headway on issues by actively seeking solutions.

His participation in MAPAQ's internal committees is equally significant and reflects his natural leadership. One example is his role as "money master" for the Sous-ministériat aux pêches et à l'aquaculture commerciales.

His colleagues and the people he managed will remember his personal qualities, particularly his humanity, integrity and of course his deadpan humour that made working alongside him so enjoyable.

We all wish Denis a long and happy retirement!

COMMERCIAL FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE: CONTINUATION OF MAPAQ ACTIVITIES

The ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation (MAPAQ) would like to reiterate that its services are continuing despite the current situation related to COVID-19 and the various social distancing measures. However, if you want to submit a project, follow up on your file, pay fees or ask questions, for example, contact your regional office or the general information service before visiting, as government employees are working from home when possible:

DIRECTION RÉGIONALE DE LA CÔTE-NORD

1-418-964-8521

cote-nord@mapaq.gouv.qc.ca

DIRECTION RÉGIONALE DE LA GASPÉSIE

1-418-368-7676

drg@mapaq.gouv.qc.ca

DIRECTION RÉGIONALE DE L'ESTUAIRE ET DES EAUX INTÉRIEURES

1-819-371-3971

dreei@mapaq.gouv.qc.ca

DIRECTION RÉGIONALE DES ÎLES-DE-LA-MADELEINE

1-418-986-2098

drim@mapaq.gouv.qc.ca

DIRECTION DE L'INNOVATION

1-418-368-7676

RENSEIGNEMENTS GÉNÉRAUX

1-888-222-6272

info@mapaq.gouv.qc.ca

COVID-19: PROTECTIVE MEASURES FOR FISHERY WORKERS

By Jean Paradis,
from the Direction régionale de la Gaspésie,
and Moez Khefifi,
from the Direction des analyses et des
politiques des pêches et de l'aquaculture

Although COVID-19 cast doubt on the resumption of spring fishing and marine product processing activities, the industry was able to demonstrate, as never before, its formidable capacity to adapt. This virulent wave has not been able to defeat industry players and company managers.



Throughout Québec, companies that provided essential services, including those in the fishing industry, were called upon to adjust quickly to protect their workers. Of course, the environment and working conditions vary between fishing vessels and seafood processing plants. However, the close quarters and difficulty in ensuring proper physical distancing between people seem to be common to both environments. Measures adapted to each reality have been taken to allow companies to continue their activities while preventing the spread of the disease.

CERTAIN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES AIMED AT PROTECTING WORKERS

The commercial fishing and aquaculture industry is a sector considered an essential service, especially during a pandemic. With this in mind, the Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ) has developed appropriate recommendations for the marine product processing industry. These recommendations include installing physical barriers to ensure social distancing, making necessary adjustments to ensure distance between workers, alternating shifts, having fewer workers, changing work methods and so on. Additional recommendations were outlined for receiving foreign workers.

The INSPQ also took the conditions aboard vessels into consideration. Measures that are in line with the actual situations of fishers allow them to carry out their work while avoiding COVID-19 infection. In addition to following good hygiene practices, it is recommended that switching out crews be avoided as much as possible for all trips, while landing employee teams should remain consistent.

In addition, the federal government announced \$62.5 million in assistance to help fish and seafood processing plants meet the requirements dictated by the coronavirus crisis.

As for the Québec Fisheries Fund (QFF), it has supported the commercial fishing industry in adapting to the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Two projects from fishers' associations have already been approved under this fund; they aim to follow the recommendations from Public Health, particularly through the acquisition of hygiene equipment.

SEAFOOD PROCESSING PLANT INITIATIVES

While the working group led by the INSPQ was introducing the safety measures to be implemented to prevent the spread of the virus, many businesses were ordering the materials needed for employee safety, such as plexiglass panels, visors, masks, gloves and hand sanitizers. This made it possible to quickly separate inadequately spaced workstations, write up internal guidelines and inform employees of the efforts underway to ensure their safety. Also, during some informal discussions, the ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation was able to observe and appreciate the initiatives implemented by the seafood processors.

Despite the fact that a sharp drop in productivity was feared, personal protection measures proved to be particularly effective, with the result that some people reported a slight increase instead. This result is certainly not characteristic of all processing methods, but it does reveal the extent to which the ingenuity of industry players can lead to more than satisfactory results, even in the middle of a health crisis. Employees, too, have been able to adapt to these new conditions, which, all in all, make it possible to protect both their health and their jobs, while at the same time supporting the survival of companies.

QUÉBEC AND CANADA SUPPORT UMEK GROUP PLANT MODERNIZATION

By Thomas St-Cyr Leroux,
from the Direction régionale de la Côte-Nord

The labour shortage is being felt particularly hard on the North Shore. An ageing population and a lack of qualified workers have required UMEK to step in. Based out of Sept-Îles and majority owned by four Innu and Maliseet First Nation councils, the company has upgraded its snow crab processing lines in recent years. Over time, the group acquired a gondola-style brine freezer, automatic crab section breakers, an automatic weight grading system and a cooker/chiller, which made it possible to create an almost fully mechanized processing line. As a result, the company was able to considerably increase its revenues and partially offset the labour shortage, a major problem for the North Shore plant. This means it can offer a higher quality product and increase these meat yields.

In 2020, the group took another step in automating its production line by automating packaging of sections of crab. This project involved installing section basket tipping equipment, a machine infeed conveyor, a labelling machine, transport conveyors and a system for cleaning cooking baskets. Entirely automated, this new line will

employ three people instead of six and will make it possible to counteract the lack of available labour. The total value of the project is \$1,434,508.

The Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation provided \$499,581 to support the project under the Commercial Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector Development Support Program. The project also received funding under Fisheries and Oceans Canada's Fisheries and Aquaculture Clean Technology Adoption Program.

The UMEK Group's plant is one of the most technologically advanced snow crab processing plants in Québec. It is a model of technological integration for the effective and efficient processing of this crustacean.

MR. ANDRÉ LAMONTAGNE, MINISTRE DE L'AGRICULTURE, DES PÊCHERIES ET DE L'ALIMENTATION, VISITS THE NORTH SHORE

By Marie Lionard,
from the Direction de la Côte-Nord

From July 7 to 9, the North Shore had the pleasure of receiving a visit from the ministre de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation. This tour was an opportunity for Mr. Lamontagne to meet with regional stakeholders, visit several businesses and discuss the issues facing the agriculture and fisheries industry, such as succession planning, the isolation of the North Shore and the labour shortage. He also took the opportunity to meet with the staff of the Direction régionale de la Côte-Nord, which is a special branch including staff from the Sous-ministériat aux pêches et à l'aquaculture commerciales, the Sous-ministériat au développement régional et au développement durable and the Sous-ministériat à la santé animale et à l'inspection des aliments.

The visit began in Baie-Comeau on July 7 with a day focused on agriculture. Mr. Lamontagne announced funding to support innovation and the development of agricultural businesses in the region. This was followed by a visit to the Bleuets Sylma blueberry farm, where he learned more about blueberry production, a growing industry on the North Shore.

The tour continued the next day in Sept-Îles, where the minister had the opportunity to speak with representatives of the Table bioalimentaire [Bio-Food Board] and the Union des producteurs agricoles [Farm Producer's Union], Indigenous and non-Indigenous fishers' groups and associations as well as seafood farmers. These meetings provided an opportunity to discuss the particular

challenges facing North Shore industries, proposed financial support and future innovations. Processors said they were pleased to have been able to openly discuss their concerns with Mr. Lamontagne, as well as new avenues to explore. That same day, the team of the Direction régionale de la Côte-Nord had the pleasure of dining with the minister, while respecting social distancing rules. This gave them an opportunity to discuss the specifics of the region and the peculiarities of a multidisciplinary team. The minister's day ended on the Sept-Îles bay with a visit to the Ferme Maricole Purmer, a producer of blue mussels, oysters, scallops and macroalgae.

Finally, on July 9, Mr. Lamontagne visited the UMEK processing plant before announcing two grants for the automation of snow crab processing lines. The minister's tour then resumed at the Bleuetière Bleu Nord and Les Jardins Secrets d'Océane, a startup that will be the first Native-owned business in Québec to produce spirulina—microalgae with many nutritional benefits.

The North Shore regional team was delighted to welcome Mr. Lamontagne and his team. They would like to thank the industry for accepting the invitation. The warm welcome received helped paint a picture of a region that faces significant challenges but also presents great opportunities.

