

# 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

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is published bimonthly as an insert in Pêche Impact.

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Our fishers, processors and all entrepreneurs in the commercial fisheries and aquaculture sector are already preparing for the start of the 2021 season. In a few weeks, fishing activities will resume in Québec, to the delight of fish and seafood lovers.

Over the past year, everyone in the industry has demonstrated a high degree of adaptability. Although the pandemic situation is still ongoing and the climate of uncertainty experienced during the 2020 season does not seem very far away, the industry is much better equipped than last year. Protocols and health measures are being implemented to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading in the workplace. You can be proud that there have been very few cases of contamination in the sector. I am confident that by maintaining our efforts, everything should go well again this year. However, vigilance and continued enforcement of health measures are still required.

What particularly emerged with the COVID-19 pandemic was the importance of Québec's food autonomy and local purchasing. We will make gains in this area by working together and redoubling our efforts. It is essential to increase supply and demand for our Québec products. Incidentally, the \$12 Challenge encouraging consumers to substitute \$12 of Québec food products every week in place of products from abroad would generate \$1 billion in annual profits for Québec farmers, fishers and processors. However, to achieve this, it is imperative that similar products from Québec be available on the market and that Québec consumers be able to identify them in stores.

The enthusiasm of Quebecers for Québec fish and seafood shows us that it is possible to increase the share of our products on the local market. It is therefore important to accelerate promotional efforts to make our products known and increase their visibility in Québec. Traceability of our products is essential so that Québec consumers can know where the products they buy come from. We also need the whole chain to work together to tell the story behind our products,

from fishers and aquaculturists to consumers. It is also the vibrancy of our coastal regions that is on display. This is how we will increase sales of Québec fish and seafood. Each of the links has a role to play in ensuring the quality, eco-friendliness, availability and development of our products.

I will be closely monitoring the situation in this sector over the next few weeks. I wish you a successful 2021 season.



Minister of Agriculture,  
Fisheries, and Food

**ANDRÉ LAMONTAGNE**

## THE CENTRE D'EXPERTISE EN GESTION DES RISQUES D'INCIDENT MARITIME IN ACTION

By Sébastien Cyr, Centre d'expertise en gestion des risques d'incidents maritimes

The overarching mission of the Centre d'expertise en gestion des risques d'incidents maritimes (CEGRIM) is to provide cutting-edge consulting support to help the Gouvernement du Québec and municipalities keep people and property safe, while preserving the St. Lawrence's fragile ecosystem.

The Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation (MAPAQ) is one of the departments that works with CEGRIM and, with the team, helps prepare the commercial fisheries and aquaculture industry for potential maritime incidents.

### CURRENT PROJECTS INVOLVING THE FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE INDUSTRY

A project has begun to map out the activity of Québec's commercial fisheries and aquaculture so that this information will be available to emergency responders through the government platform Infrastructure Géomatique Ouverte (IG02). Part of the data was integrated last December (mariculture sites and facilities where marine products are prepared). This work will continue in the year ahead, with location of other information, such as seawater intakes, sites where lobsters are kept in captivity, fishing areas (freshwater and saltwater), sea urchin and algae harvesting areas, etc. Don't be surprised if you get a call from MAPAQ next fall or winter to check certain pieces of information. The ultimate goal of all of this is to ensure that emergency responders have the correct information.

At the same time, CEGRIM has developed a close relationship with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Canadian Coast Guard and a discussion group was formed last fall by mutual agreement. Its purpose is to undertake and strengthen collaboration, coordination and ties between departments and provincial and federal organizations who work to prepare for and manage maritime incidents, especially in the fisheries and aquaculture sector. It will be able to address a variety of topics, for example, how to share knowledge and information, the rules in place about closing and opening fisheries in the event of an incident, food safety for fish and seafood after a spill, the process for compensating customers, holding campaigns to raise awareness and developing new decision-making tools.

These prevention tools and the good relationships developed with our partners should make it easier to work together in the event of an incident and minimize impacts on Québec customers as much as possible.

## THE WINDS OF MODERNIZATION IN THE MARINE PRODUCT PROCESSING SECTOR IN CÔTE-NORD

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

The marine product processing industry in Côte-Nord is continuing to modernize. The Les Crabiers du Nord and Poséidon “Les Poissons et Crustacés” processing plants actually decided to mechanize their snow crab processing chain by acquiring “Baader” type crab butchers to break crabs down into sections. This new equipment, which is increasingly popular with processors, will help increase the processing capacity of these plants. It will also facilitate operations by making this task more ergonomic and less physically taxing for workers, since the device will take over their job of breaking the crab into sections. Lastly, the purchase of this new equipment will help alleviate the ongoing labour shortage while improving the quality of the end product.

The Les Crabiers du Nord processing plant also modernized its Stimpson’s surfclam processing line by integrating an x-ray machine that can detect viscera in the mollusk’s foot. This will boost productivity in the chain by detecting and rejecting unemptied feet, an operation that has been done manually until now. Les Crabiers du Nord is the leading Stimpson’s surfclam processor in Côte-Nord.

Lastly, the I&S Seafoods company processing plant is planning to acquire a pelagic fish separator, which should significantly boost the plant’s processing capacity for mackerel, capelin and herring while cutting labour needs almost in half. That makes this separator another solution for the ongoing labour shortage problem.

The modernization of Côte-Nord plants will not only increase the quality of products on offer, it will also raise Côte-Nord’s profile both in Québec and on international markets.

These initiatives received support from MAPAQ’s program to support development in the commercial fisheries and aquaculture sector.

To learn more about “Baader” type crab butchers : [https://www.baader.com/en/products/fish\\_processing/shellfish-1/butchering.html](https://www.baader.com/en/products/fish_processing/shellfish-1/butchering.html)

## FOOD AUTONOMY: A GROWING CONCERN IN QUÉBEC

By **Michel Bélanger**,  
Direction des analyses et des politiques des pêches  
et de l’aquaculture

The COVID-19 pandemic has led us all to reflect on Québec’s dependence on certain imports, especially commodities like food. In recent months, the media and the population have focused their attention on the availability of fresh, high-quality products in Québec. There has been a vocal push to increase the market share of made-in-Québec food for years, and the health crisis has made us even more aware of how important this is.

Consumers’ renewed interest in buying local is definitely an opportunity for the Québec fish and seafood industry to take another look at how it markets its products in Québec, especially the availability and identification of Québec aquatic products.

### QUÉBEC: A MARKET OPEN TO MORE LOCAL AQUATIC PRODUCTS

The share of Québec marine product exports is often looked at in relation to the province’s fish and seafood imports. By analyzing imports and exports, however, we see that these are the not the same categories of products. Québec mainly exports crab and lobster: these two products accounted for 83.3% of the total value of exports in 2019. That same year, Québec primarily imported farmed shrimp, salmon and tuna (canned), which together accounted for 58% of the total value of imports.

Thanks to marketing efforts and increased international demand, the value of lobster and crab have risen remarkably on the international market. Exports allow us to access a broader pool of consumers who are interested in buying speciality products. At the same time, in Québec, local production alone does not fill the niche for aquatic products for everyday consumption.

### INCREASING LOCAL PRODUCT VISIBILITY WITH IDENTIFICATION AND TRACEABILITY

Consumers must be able to identify Québec aquatic products quickly and easily if they are to recognize them and choose them. Not all Québec aquatic products, however, are identified as such on the Québec market. There are, of course, existing initiatives, such as “Homard de

Gaspésie” identifying lobsters caught in the Gaspé and certain prepackaged products bearing the logo “Aliments du Québec” to indicate that they are Québec food products. Yet, if all of Québec’s aquatic products were easy to recognize, Quebecers would notice that there are many local foods already available, for example Northern shrimp, Greenland halibut fillet, rainbow trout, arctic char, and a number of processed products.

An initiative is being set up to respond to growing interest for Québec aquatic species. The Association québécoise de l’industrie de la pêche (AQIP) is actually already working on increasing its members’ participation in the Aliments du Québec certification. In addition, upcoming launches of processed products such as sauces, pasta and chowders, will make Québec fish and seafood more accessible to Québec consumers. Aquaculture products should also be more and more available in Québec. Success in marketing Québec oysters and adopting new fish production technologies gives us hope that short term production will increase. The reopening of redfish fishery should also reduce demand for certain imported products through a substitution effect, contributing to greater food autonomy in Québec. Supply diversification, aquaculture and identification are three specific strategies that will make our industry more competitive with imported fish and seafood products on the Québec market.

Bear in mind that part of the Ministère’s 2018-2025 Action Plan to develop the commercial fishing and aquaculture industry includes increasing the value of Québec content in fish and seafood purchased in Québec. Identifying and promoting Québec aquatic products on the domestic market were identified as steps to take to achieve that. This is part of the Gouvernement du Québec’s strategy to promote buying local and increase the province’s food autonomy.

## A MAJOR SECTOR STUDY FOR THE COMITÉ SECTORIEL DE MAIN-D'ŒUVRE DES PÊCHES MARITIMES

**By Danielle Bouchard**, Direction régionale de la Gaspésie

**Collaboration: Omar Sarr**, Direction des analyses et des politiques des pêches et de l'aquaculture

In the months ahead, the Comité sectoriel de main-d'œuvre des pêches maritimes (CSMOPM) will conduct a study to document the experiences of workers and employers in the fisheries and aquaculture industry. The information gathered will be used to develop and share effective measures and tools, as well as trainings for companies. Improved working conditions should have positive repercussions for recruiting and retaining new workers, which is significant given the current labour shortage. This will also help the sector grow.

The plan is to interview 300 respondents: 150 employers and 150 workers from all sectors to get a statistically robust sample. More specifically, CSMOPM's goal is to take all steps necessary to make sure that all processing companies are surveyed.

In addition to financing this study, the MAPAQ is inviting all respondents from all sectors to actively participate in surveying and gathering data. To that end, you will soon be receiving a request either electronically or by mail. MAPAQ considers this information essential to continue working and developing an effective strategic plan for this crucial challenge to the sector's future.

## NEWS FROM THE MINISTÈRE

Without a doubt, the year 2020 was a memorable one for the Sous-ministériat aux pêches et à l'aquaculture commerciales (SMPAC) and its entire team. As we kick off 2021, let's mention...

...with a heavy heart, the departure of two important individuals from the MAPAQ and SMPAC for a well-earned retirement: Ms. Julie Boyer from the Direction de l'innovation (DI) and Mr. Denis Desrosiers from the Direction des analyses et des politiques des pêches et de l'aquaculture (DAPPA). We wish them a new chapter in their lives full of joy, happiness and new discoveries, with good health throughout!

On October 30th, after over thirty years of service in the DI, Ms. Julie Boyer embarked on a new journey, sailing toward new horizons. For everything she has achieved in her career in the commercial fisheries and aquaculture sector, Julie deserves the recognition of her many colleagues and the entire SMPAC. We have no doubt she will tackle her new challenges with the vim and vigour she is known for!



On January 26th, after over twenty years at MAPAQ, including six years as the DAPPA director, Mr. Denis Desrosiers decided to devote himself to his personal life, including playing the guitar and skiing.



Throughout his years at MAPAQ, Denis shared his expertise, especially in intergovernmental relations, with the Ministère and the community.

... the arrival of three new people joining the SMPAC family: Ms. Maeva Louis at the Direction régionale de la Gaspésie (DRG), Mr. Jérémie Persant at the Direction de l'innovation (DI) and Mr. Djiby Bocar Sall at the Direction régionale de l'estuaire et des eaux intérieures (DREEI).

On September 14th, Mr. Djiby Bocar Sall joined the SMPAC as the DREEI director. With a bachelor's degree in agroecology and a master's degree in rural economics, Mr. Sall has been working at MAPAQ since 2001. His experience as an expert coordinator in the field crops sector will certainly be an advantage in the fisheries and aquaculture industry.



Mr. Sall has coordinated profitability studies on Québec's midshore lobster boats and crabbers, which likely gave him a taste for taking up new challenges in the fisheries and aquaculture industry.

On January 18th, Ms. Maeva Louis joined the team at the DRG, as an industry development officer in Rimouski, to provide an SMPAC presence in Bas-Saint-Laurent. Originally from New Caledonia, she holds a master's in public accounting and financial auditing as well as a master's in maritime resource management. She has worked for departments such as Transport Canada and Revenu Québec, where she further developed her expertise.



On September 22nd, Mr. Jérémie Persant joined the DI. Mr. Persant is the new SMPAC innovation adviser. He holds a master's degree in food science and technology. With his education and experience at La Crevette du Nord Atlantique and Merinov, he brings solid expertise in research and development for commercial fisheries and aquaculture.



## VIRTUAL EVENT: LES ÎLES-DE-LA- MADELEINE'S 2020 FISHING AND MARICULTURE INDUSTRY GATHERING

By **Karine Villemare**, Direction régionale des Îles-de-la-Madeleine

Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine annual fishing and mariculture industry gathering was held virtually on December 16th, in accordance with COVID-19-related health recommendations. A number of informational messages and presentations were broadcast virtually to attendees, who were mainly maritime workers, marine product processors, association representatives, professional fishing students and socioeconomic players in the sector.

The day started with addresses by the mayor, Mr. Jonathan Lapierre, and the MNA for Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Mr. Joël Arseneau. The Ministre de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation, Mr. André Lamontagne, generously gave his time to participate in the event for the first time. In addition to answering questions from attendees, he encouraged participants to take the "\$12 Challenge" — replacing \$12 a week in foreign product purchases with local product purchases. He explained that this simple act is a step toward greater food autonomy, and could make an extremely positive impact on the entire Québec biofood sector.

This was followed by traditional presentations reviewing current events and the fishing results for 2020. These two topics garner a lot of interest every year. Attendees observed that for the vast majority of fisheries, 2020 was a good year for the sector in Les Îles, given the situation.

Participants viewed a number of presentations on various topics, including:

- *Cooperating to make the fishing and mariculture sector more attractive*, by the Communauté maritime des Îles-de-la-Madeleine;
- *Video of a health and safety orientation session on a lobster boat*, made by the Comité permanent sur la sécurité des bateaux de pêche du Québec and the Comité sectoriel de main-d'œuvre des pêches maritimes;
- *Developing and implementing a decision-making tool for the LFA 22 lobster fishing season opening*, by the Regroupement des pêcheurs et des pêcheuses des côtes des Îles (RPPCI) and Merinov;
- *Unit 1 redfish stock assessment*, by Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Canadian Coast Guard;
- *Research project for developing a trawl net to resume commercial redfish fishing*, by Merinov.

A total of 135 participants attended the virtual event simultaneously — roughly the same number as in previous years. Once again this year, the high attendance demonstrates how valuable this event is. In general, people welcomed the virtual format for disseminating information.

The team from the Municipalité des Îles-de-la-Madeleine, which was coordinating the event on behalf of the Table pêche et mariculture des Îles-de-la-Madeleine, showed great flexibility in successfully holding the 2020 fishing and mariculture industry gathering. Once again this year, the MAPAQ was pleased to support this event, which brings together the entire industry.

To get a copy of some of the presentations, contact Évangéline Leblanc, sector liaison and dialogue project manager for the Municipalité des Îles-de-la-Madeleine, at [eleblanc@muniles.ca](mailto:eleblanc@muniles.ca).



Photo credit: Communauté maritime des Îles-de-la-Madeleine

## QUÉBEC'S INSHORE AREA SNOW CRAB FISHERY RECEIVES MARINE STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL (MSC) CERTIFICATION

By **Marie Lionard**,

Direction régionale de la Côte-Nord

Since December 2020, snow crab fishery in Québec's inshore areas (areas 12A-17, except area 12B) has been certified by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). Receiving this certification is excellent news for snow crab processors as well as for Québec's inshore crabbers. The Association québécoise de l'industrie de la pêche (AQIP) initiated the environmental certification process in 2016. Certification is granted for a five-year period, with annual audits and an obligation to improve on certain processes, in order to eliminate interactions with right whales. AQIP received financial support from MAPAQ for this project.

MSC certification is an international certification that attests to fishing practices that are sustainable, protect the environment, and comply with standards in force. It is based on stock conditions, the impact of fishing on surrounding ecosystems, and fishery management system efficiency and performance. This makes it a highly desirable certification for fisheries, since it opens the door to many markets (especially European and Asian), but it is also increasingly sought out by consumers, because they can be sure that the product comes from fishing practices that have been deemed environmentally responsible.

With this new certification, the target of 70% marine product environmental certification has been achieved. Congratulations to AQIP and all the Côte-Nord snow crab fishers on achieving MSC certification! We wish them a great 2021 season.