

B.C.'s aquaculture leads the nation

By Scott Simpson
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VANCOUVER - Canada's aquaculture industry generated record operating revenues of nearly \$1 billion in 2006, and British Columbia was responsible for the majority of that figure, Statistics Canada reported on Wednesday.

National revenues from production of finfish and shellfish were up 24.7 per cent from 2005, reaching \$968 million, although total tonnage was slightly down from record volumes in 2002.

Operating revenues generated by Canada's aquaculture industry in 2006 were at an all-time high for the second consecutive year as a result of increased production and exports.

Finfish sales, particularly Atlantic salmon raised in B.C. and New Brunswick, were up 26.2 per cent to \$867.2 million - 89.5 per cent of total operating revenues, Stats Canada said.

By contrast, mollusk revenue went up 4.1 per cent to \$71.7 million.

The value of B.C.'s gross Canadian output was a record \$425 million, compared to \$373 million in 2005.

The United States was the biggest market, consuming more than 85 per cent of Canadian production.

"I think our B.C. growth was about 10 per cent in volume, but in value it was three times that from 2005 to '06," said Clare Backman of Marine Harvest, one of B.C.'s primary producers of farmed salmon.

Backman said the price of salmon can drop if there's an oversupply, but that hasn't happened recently.

B.C. doesn't sell salmon into China, but in global terms, Chinese demand is helping push the price up for producers here, he said.

"The market was very good for salmon last year. Not every year is as strong perhaps as '06, but '05 was a strong year too. We've been enjoying good prices in the marketplace, especially in our main market south of the border in the U.S."

Ruth Salmon, acting executive director of the Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance, said the industry continues to grow "despite the fact that we don't get a lot of the solid

government investment and support we'd like to see," said. "The demand for our product is huge.

"Innovation in the industry continues to advance, so I think we're going to see this trend continue."

Salmon said it was "great news for rural Canada, as it means more jobs and economic opportunities.

"The U.S. is our major market and it is strong and in some sectors we can't meet the demand. We have a real advantage there compared to some other countries."

Salmon said that the industry could make further advances if it was able to increase the number of sites where it can operate along the B.C. and eastern Canadian coastlines.

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