

**Demand for B.C. farmed salmon outstrips supply, industry says
Production holds steady at about 72,000 tonnes**

Carla Wilson, Times Colonist

APRIL 15, 2008

Demand from U.S. buyers for farmed B.C. salmon is outstripping supply and the situation is expected to continue, says an industry spokeswoman.

About 85 per cent of the farmed salmon produced off B.C.'s coast is sent to the United States where, last week, officials announced total closure this year of the commercial and sport chinook salmon fisheries off California and most of Oregon.

"We've been meeting with a bunch of distributors over the last couple of weeks just to talk a little bit about the product and so on," Mary Ellen Walling, executive director of the B.C. Salmon Farmers Association, said yesterday. "What I continually hear is there's frustration from the retailers about the lack of access to increased amount of B.C. product."

B.C. fish farmers produced about 72,000 tonnes of salmon in 2006. Walling said the amount will be the same this year. Production is limited at this time to what can be produced at existing farms, Walling said. Farmers hold 126 licences and about 80 sites are operating at any one time, because some are being fallowed.

"We can't meet the market demand for our product. That's been going on [for] three, four years."

B.C. salmon farmers could likely sell double what they've been sending south of the border, Walling said.

Walling does not expect the potential closure of the Fraser River sockeye run this season to impact demand for farmed salmon. The sockeye is a "particular product." That type of salmon with its bright-red flesh is not farmed. It is only available as wild caught.

B.C. Fisheries Minister Pat Bell recently announced a moratorium on expansion of farms on the North Coast until the province develops a long-term vision for aquaculture.

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