



IF NOT OFFSHORE FINFISH FARMING, THEN WHAT? AQUACULTURE BY THE PEOPLE FOR THE PEOPLE, THAT'S WHAT!

Environmental and social impacts of offshore finfish farming (OFF) mimic the harms of land-based industrial food production systems. We do not need another industry that exports domestically produced food, increases the carbon food-print¹, and threatens local economies. Instead, the United States must support sustainable seafood systems that benefit people, local economies, and the environment.

The alternative to offshore finfish farming is simple: sustainable wild-caught seafood, and fish farming practices that are embedded in social, economic, and environmental values. Whether the seafood is wild-caught or farm-raised, both scale and management practices are crucial for sustainability. The seafood system must be protected through local investment and smart development with conservation and environmental awareness as key priorities.



Local Wild Fish: Don't Cage Our Oceans (DCO2) supports wild seafood caught by community-based, responsible fishing operations. Responsible fishing commits to catching at sustainable levels that prevent overfishing, support rebuilding of fish populations, protect fish habitat and marine ecosystems, and contribute to thriving local communities that depend on our oceans. Local fishermen are likely to be more invested in their community, care about the local economy, and want to protect the marine ecosystem for future generations of fishermen.



Sustainable Aquaculture: Aquaculture has been practiced ecologically sustainably for thousands of years: from the Chinampas of the Aztecs, to the traditional fishponds of Hawai'i, and to the fish and rice rotations still practiced in Asia and Louisiana. Unfortunately, high-input/high-impact destructive forms of modern aquaculture, such as shrimp, salmon, and offshore finfish farming, have given the ancient practice a bad name. But, not all aquaculture is bad for the environment, public health, and local economies.

¹ Environmental pressures created by the food demands of individuals, organizations, and geopolitical entities.

DCO2 supports aquaculture that reflects the following general guidelines:



Prioritize raising species that are low-input and low-impact, like marine algae, filter feeders, and animals that eat wild or naturally occurring feed.



Establish policies that protect the oceans from being carved into parcels and given to private investors that funnel money and opportunity away from coastal communities.



Scale appropriately so that aquaculture does not harm marine ecosystems, wild fish populations, or water quality, and does not displace other activities, such as fishing.



Provide the local community with nutritional and economic benefits.



Do not use genetically modified organisms in the fish farms or for fish feed.

Low-input forms of aquaculture, such as shellfish and seaweed farming, can be done sustainably and at a scale that engages coastal communities. Across the US, more coastal entrepreneurs are investing in these low-impact systems and they show great promise as ways to expand farmed seafood production and keep control in the communities, through local ownership, processing, and distribution mechanisms.

Recirculating Systems: eco-friendly farms that use clean recycled water to grow local, accessible, fresh food, and create stable green jobs. A recirculating farm uses clean recycled water, as a basis to grow food. These farms can grow plants (hydroponics), fish (aquaculture), or both plants and fish together (aquaponics). DCO2 supports these systems that incorporate sustainable practices involving smart stocking density, water conservation, feed, energy use, and humane treatment and community engagement.



Left: Jack Wiegardt of Northwest Oyster Farms grows cherrystone clams and oysters from seed; Above: A seaweed farmer in Nusa Lembongan (Indonesia) gathers edible seaweed that has grown on a rope. Images courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.