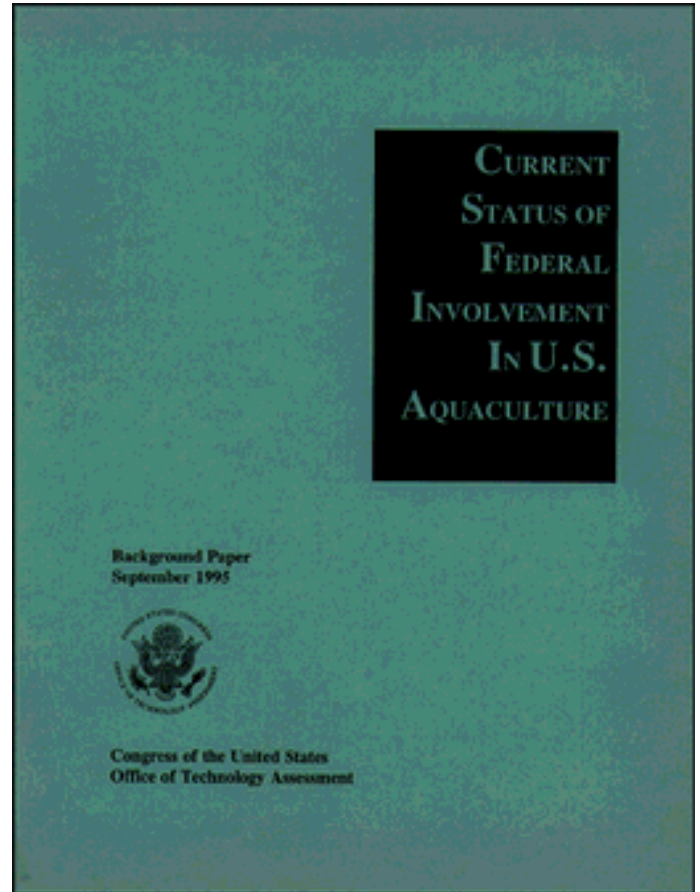


*Current Status of Federal Involvement in
U.S. Aquaculture*

September 1995



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Foreword

As U.S. capture fisheries are declining, interest in aquaculture is again growing. Private, commercial aquaculture--the production of aquatic organisms (finfish, shellfish, and plants) by one or more individuals or corporate bodies that have owned them through all or part of their rearing period--is being considered for its potential to provide employment and income to declining coastal and rural communities, to help improve the U.S. balance of trade, and to provide consumers with a plentiful, safe, and nutritious protein source.

The United States lacks a strong national aquaculture policy and supporting federal presence. Over the years, levels and foci of agency involvement in aquaculture development have shifted in response to legislation and its differing interpretations. The National Aquaculture Act (NAA), the primary piece of aquaculture-related legislation, is slated for reauthorization in 1995 as part of the Farm Bill. One issue that underlies reconsideration of the NAA and related legislation is the federal role in research and regulation of this emerging industry.

Congress requested this Background Paper to provide information on technology issues of immediate importance to the U.S. aquaculture industry. This is a companion piece to the Background Paper on *Selected Technology Issues in U.S. Aquaculture*. Committees requesting the assessment were the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries (since disbanded), the House Committee on Agriculture and its Subcommittee on Livestock, and the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs.

OTA greatly appreciates the contributions of the Advisory Panel, authors of contracted papers, workshop participants, federal liaisons, and the many additional people who reviewed material for the report or gave valuable guidance. Their timely and in-depth assistance allowed us to explore some of the complex issues related to the federal role in aquaculture. As with all OTA studies, the content of this report is solely the responsibility of OTA.

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NOTE: OTA appreciates and is grateful for the valuable assistance and thoughtful critiques provided by the advisory panel members. The panel does not, however, necessarily approve, disapprove, or endorse this report. OTA assumes full responsibility for the report and the accuracy of its contents.

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