

Ensuring the multi-million dollar growth opportunity of sustainable shellfish and seaweed farming

Shellfish and seaweed farming (oysters, mussels, scallops, kelp, clams) is poised to grow by 40% over the next five years if the Canadian Shellfish Sanitation Program (CSSP) is supported and adequately funded to provide the necessary oversight to ensure that seafarms operate, shellfish are harvested, and products are tested for safety before entering the market. A thriving shellfish and marine plant sea farming sector diversifies our seafood sector, offers opportunities for business ownership, coastal jobs, reconciliation in the blue economy, sustainable food, and contributes to the restoration of marine ecosystems.

However, underfunding of the Canadian Shellfish Sanitation Program is now one of the critical limiting factors preventing our coastal communities from realizing the promise of sustainable shellfish and seaweed farming. Thousands of kilometers of coastline perfect for shellfish farming and harvesting are unclassified or closed to new farms or expansions, not because these waters are actually contaminated, but simply because the CSSP lacks the capacity to undertake the required water testing. Hundreds of current harvesting sites are at risk of closure as the departments are forced to reduce their testing areas due to ever dwindling resources. There has been no increase in permanent funding to this required program in twenty years. Canadian communities and industry are losing market opportunities. Adequate funding and modernization

of the CSSP is even more important now as shifting ocean temperatures impact the timing and safety of shellfish harvests and require more frequent testing to ensure products can get to market. The CSSP needs to be recognized and supported not only as important for Canadian consumer safety, but as a key enabler of coastal jobs, small businesses, and investment confidence.

Fortunately, with a relatively small investment, this problem can be solved and communities on all coasts will see the boom. In 2022, the latest federal government review¹⁰⁷ of the CSSP reiterated that the program does not have sufficient funding to operate as it should, “to ensure that health risks are minimized, the shellfish industry remains strong, and stakeholder and partner needs are served appropriately”. It recommended a minimum of \$30 million annually, while the CSSP is only slated to receive \$10 million annually in the coming years.

Recommended Investment:
\$20 million per year, ongoing [ECCC, DFO, CFIA]

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¹⁰⁷ Government of Canada, “Horizontal Evaluation of the Canadian Shellfish Sanitation Program.” <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/ae-ve/evaluations/22-23/96744-eng.html>



Photo: Simon Ryder Burbridge