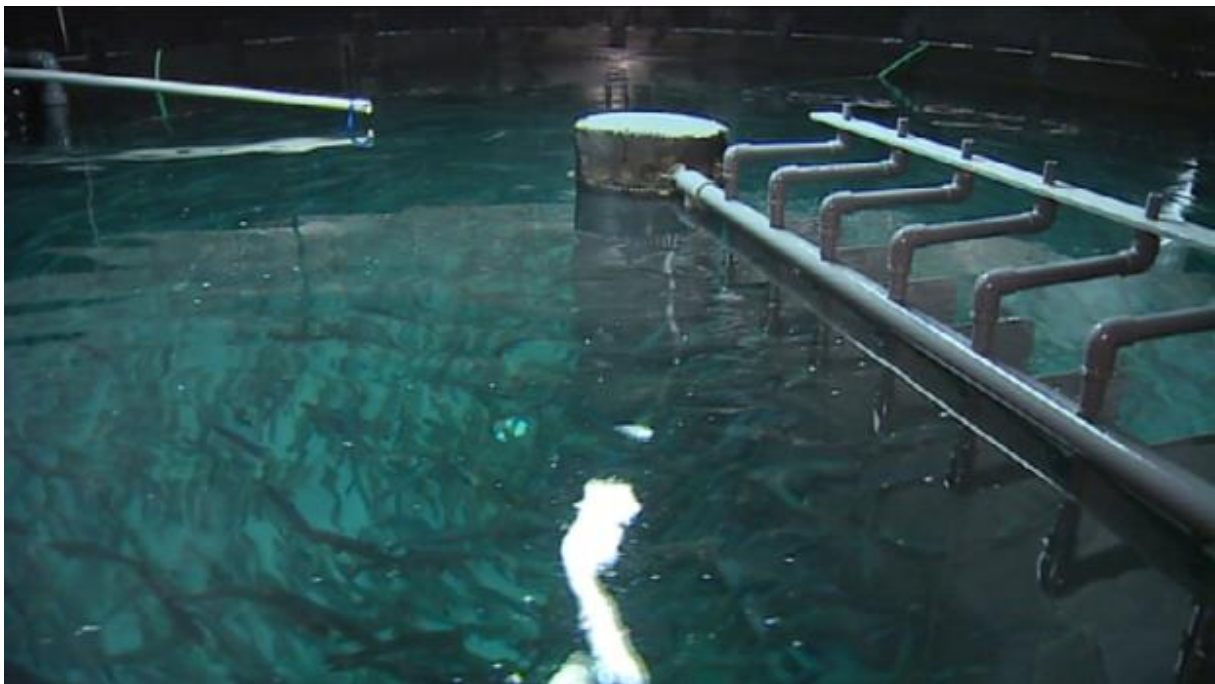


Nova Scotia land-based fish farm gets \$1M federal investment

Company with unique closed-containment system receives repayable loan to expand production

By Zak Markan,



Juvenile salmon swim in a tank at the Sustainable Blue Fish Farm in Hants County. (CBC)

An operation in the Annapolis Valley that farms salmon in tanks on land has received a \$1-million repayable loan from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency to expand its business.

Sustainable Blue Fish Farming Ltd. in Centre Burlington has spent 10 years developing what it calls a "zero discharge" closed-containment system to raise Atlantic salmon.

"By late fall this year, we'll be at full production at our existing facilities, which gives us a maximum production capability of about 200 tonnes of salmon every year," Sustainable Blue CEO Kirk Havercroft told CBC Nova Scotia's *Information Morning*.

"This ACOA contribution allows us to increase that production because we are in the process of building a new building. That will take us to a capacity of 500 tonnes of production."

Zero-discharge model

Land-based fish farms are viewed as an alternative to ocean-based operations, which have been criticized for pollution, fish escapes and the use of antibiotics to control disease.

The Sustainable Blue facility has a system that recycles all salt water in the salmon tanks, while waste is drawn out and used as fertilizer.

The salmon are fed organic fish food, and since the farm carefully controls any contaminants that enter the tanks, it is not necessary to give the fish antibiotics, Havercroft said.

"That treatment system is effective enough to keep the water nice and clean and sterilized so that we don't have to discharge. We don't have to take new water in just to dilute the pollutants building up inside the tank water," he said.



Kirk Havercroft, CEO of Sustainable Blue Fish Farming. (CBC)

A peer review study found some negative environmental impacts from other Nova Scotia land-based fish farms. But Havercroft said Sustainable Blue's zero-discharge model avoids those issues.

"Conventional land-based recirculating systems, they do an excellent job of containing the waste on land," he said. "But in a typical setup there's usually some discharge component, just a small component, just to really buffer the complexities of keeping the water clean all the time."

Ample demand

Havercroft said he believes there is enough demand for high quality fish-farmed salmon to make the case for the expansion in Centre Burlington.

"In the whole of North America, we consumed approximately 350,000 metric tonnes of salmon in 2016," he said. He adds that about 15 per cent of that demand — between 40,000 and 50,000 metric tonnes — is for "premium" salmon produced in sustainable tanks, or from the wild.

"This is what separates us, our ability to provide a high quality product," he said.

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/aquaculture-federal-funding-nova-scotia-1.4099012>