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Intelligence

# U.S. aquaculture faces nearly eight times more federal regulation than other food sectors, study finds

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By Responsible Seafood Advocate

## Study finds U.S. aquaculture faces more federal regulation than other food sectors, raising questions about current policies

Aquaculture in the United States is subject to significantly more federal regulation than other food production sectors, according to a study analyzing five decades of data.

The research, conducted by a team from institutions including the University of Colorado Boulder, the University of California Santa Barbara, the University of Helsinki and the University of Oxford, found that aquaculture faces nearly eight times more federal regulations than terrestrial livestock and roughly three times more than crop production.

The analysis drew on the Code of Federal Regulations from 1970 to 2020, covering 44 food-related industries across five sectors: aquaculture, crop farming, fishing, hunting and trapping and terrestrial livestock farming.



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Aquaculture has faced the highest number of direct federal regulations each year since at least 1970 and is overseen by a broader range of agencies than other food sectors, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency.

A promotional banner for the Global Seafood Alliance. On the left is the logo, which features a stylized fish head inside a circle, with the text "Global Seafood ALLIANCE" to its right. In the center, the slogan "For the love of seafood." is written in a large, blue, serif font. Below the slogan is a white button with a blue border that says "BECOME A MEMBER". On the right side of the banner is a photograph of a smiling woman in a white tank top, possibly a seafood worker or chef, with a blurred background of a kitchen or processing area.

(<https://www.globalseafood.org/membership/>).

"We found that the total number of food system regulations has increased over time, with large disparities across individual food sectors," wrote the researchers.

The study also compared regulatory intensity with environmental indicators such as greenhouse gas emissions, land use and water use per kilogram of food produced. In several cases, lower-impact sectors, including aquaculture, were subject to as many or more regulations than higher-impact industries such as beef and lamb production.

The results suggest aquaculture may face a disproportionate regulatory burden, potentially putting it at a disadvantage in the U.S. marketplace. Researchers pointed to several factors, including the sector's poor fit within traditional agricultural frameworks and the involvement of multiple agencies with limited coordination.

"While the number of regulations is only a proxy measure of regulatory burden, our results suggest that the U.S. federal regulatory landscape might disadvantage some lower-environmental-impact food industries and their products in the U.S. marketplace, especially aquaculture," wrote the researchers.

The findings raise questions about whether current policies align with efforts to support lower-impact food production. The study said regulators could address the issue by standardizing requirements across food sectors or clarifying the policy goals behind the current framework.

### **Read the full study**

**([https://www.researchgate.net/publication/401221408\\_Aquaculture\\_is\\_subject\\_to\\_more\\_regulations\\_th](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/401221408_Aquaculture_is_subject_to_more_regulations_th)**

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