



AquaponicsAssociation.org
1240 Evarts Street, NE
Washington, DC 20018

February 15, 2021

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, & Forestry

The Honorable David Scott, Chair
U.S. House Agriculture Committee

The Honorable John Boozman, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, & Forestry

The Honorable K. Michael Conaway
Ranking Member
U.S. House Agriculture Committee

**Letter to the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry; and the U.S. House
Agriculture Committee Regarding Aquaponics Priorities in the 117th Congress**

Dear Senators and Representatives,

On behalf of aquaponics farmers across the United States of America, the Aquaponics Association thanks you for the aquaponics provisions in the 2018 Farm Bill. As we start a new Congress, aquaponics growers request that the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry; and the U.S. House Agriculture Committee consider the recommendations offered in this letter to build on the previous Farm Bill and support the continued expansion of aquaponics.

Aquaponics is a food production system that integrates fish production (aquaculture) with soilless plant production (hydroponics) into a single closed loop.



*Pictured: Bella Vita commercial
aquaponic farm in Brookeville, MD*

Benefits of aquaponics include year-round production in any climate; dramatically less water use; minimal agriculture discharge to air, water, and soil; and less food miles when systems are located near consumers in cities or harsh climates. Aquaponics creates local jobs in communities, increases domestic production of plants and high-quality fish protein, reduces the environmental toll of land-based agriculture, improves food security for populations without access to fresh food, and engages students with hands-on STEM education.

We ask the Senate and House Agriculture Committees to consider the following actions to support aquaponics:

- 1) **Hold a hearing on Aquaponics.** Aquaponics is still relatively unknown across the U.S., even among agriculture experts and growers. A congressional hearing will give aquaponics growers the opportunity to introduce themselves and their benefits to policymakers and the public. A hearing will also allow for a discussion of the unique challenges aquaponics growers face and how the next Farm Bill can provide support.
- 2) **Oversee the establishment of the USDA Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP).** The 2018 U.S. Farm Bill created the OUAIP to encourage and promote urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural practices, including aquaponics. In 2019, Congress appropriated \$5 million to the Office. The USDA has missed several deadlines to fully establish the Office, including the requirement to create an Advisory Committee. The Office will foster regulatory clarity and important resources for the aquaponics industry.
- 3) **Recognize new and emerging food production systems, such as aquaponic systems, as important suppliers of food in the future.** To this end, we encourage better coordination within federal agencies by establishing regular lines of contact between the NOAA Fisheries offices, Regional Aquaculture Centers, USDA Extension Services, and the OUAIP. Ensure that any new laws or regulations intended for agricultural production are worded to include aquaponics on a level playing field with traditional soil growers.
- 4) **Amend the 1990 Organic Food Production Act to explicitly allow for soil-less Organic Certification.** The USDA is currently being sued to stop the Organic Certification of aquaponic crops. Aquaponics fits the Mission of the Organic label because it does not require harmful pesticides; is environmentally sustainable; and relies on natural microbial ecosystems in the root zone for healthy plant growth. In an era of climate change, resource depletion, and rapid population growth, the Organic label is a critical incentive to draw more growers and investors into aquaponics.

Aquaponics will further establish the United States as a leader in sustainable agriculture and build a better future for generations to come.

We encourage you to reach out to us if you have questions about aquaponics or would like to arrange a tour of aquaponic operations.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Filipowich', with a stylized, cursive script.

Brian Filipowich, Chairman
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