



January 6, 2021

Mr. Robert Bonnie

U.S. Department of Agriculture Team Lead, Biden-Harris Transition

Ms. Geovette Washington, J.D.

U.S. Department of Commerce Team Lead, Biden-Harris Transition

Dear Ms. Washington and Mr. Bonnie:

On behalf of aquaponic farmers across the United States of America, the Aquaponics Association offers the following recommendations to the Biden-Harris Transition to expand one of the most efficient forms of agriculture: aquaponics.

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

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 Biden-Harris transition team to consider the following actions to support aquaponics:

- 1) **Fully establish 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.

- 2) **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. Use this network to provide established and aspiring aquaponics professionals with a network of educators, advocates, and informational resources at the regional, state, county and municipal levels using established conduits.
  
- 3) **Ensure that aquaponics remain eligible for USDA 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,

Brian Filipowich, Chairman  
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