



From Hatchery to Household: Evaluating the Flow of Value in Modern Aquaculture Systems

Lysander Quillan*

Department of Marine Resource Economics, Northern Coastline University, Halifax, Canada

DESCRIPTION

Aquaculture has become an increasingly important source of food production, supporting livelihoods and contributing to nutritional supply across diverse regions. The process of bringing aquatic products from controlled farming environments to consumers involves a sequence of interconnected activities commonly described as the aquaculture value chain. This chain includes input supply, production, harvesting, processing, distribution, and final consumption. Each stage contributes to the overall value of the product while also presenting opportunities and constraints that influence efficiency, quality, and profitability.

The initial stage of the value chain involves the supply of inputs such as seeds, feed, equipment, and technical knowledge. Hatcheries play a central role by providing healthy larvae or fingerlings that determine the quality of future stock. Feed suppliers contribute to growth performance and cost structure, as feed expenses represent a significant portion of production costs. Access to reliable and affordable inputs often determines the success of farming operations, especially in regions where infrastructure and logistics are limited.

Production forms the next phase, where fish, crustaceans, or other aquatic organisms are raised under managed conditions. Farmers adopt different systems ranging from extensive ponds to intensive recirculating setups, depending on available resources and market demand. Productivity at this stage is influenced by factors such as water quality, stocking density, disease management, and feeding practices. Efficient production enhances yield and reduces losses, directly affecting profitability within the chain.

Harvesting represents a transition from cultivation to market readiness. Timing is an important factor, as it determines product size, quality, and price. Improper handling during harvest can lead to physical damage and reduced shelf life. Techniques such as careful netting and immediate cooling help maintain product integrity. This stage also requires coordination

with buyers and processors to ensure smooth movement into subsequent phases.

Processing adds value by transforming raw aquatic products into forms that meet consumer preferences. Activities include cleaning, filleting, freezing, packaging, and in some cases, cooking or further preparation. Processing facilities must adhere to hygiene and safety standards to maintain product quality and meet regulatory requirements for both domestic and export markets. Value addition at this stage can significantly increase income, particularly when products are differentiated through branding or quality certification.

Distribution connects producers and processors with markets, involving transportation, storage, and logistics. Cold chain systems are especially important in maintaining freshness and preventing spoilage. In many regions, inadequate infrastructure can lead to losses and reduced product value. Efficient distribution networks ensure that products reach consumers in optimal condition, while also expanding market access for producers.

Sustainability considerations are increasingly integrated into value chain assessments. Environmental impacts such as water use, waste generation, and habitat effects are evaluated alongside economic performance. Social aspects, including labor conditions and community benefits, are also considered. Sustainable practices not only reduce environmental pressure but also enhance market acceptance, especially in regions where consumers prioritize responsible sourcing.

Technological advancements are influencing various stages of the aquaculture value chain. Digital tools enable better monitoring of production conditions, while data analytics support decision-making related to feeding, harvesting, and market timing. Traceability systems improve transparency by allowing consumers to track the origin and handling of products. These developments contribute to improved efficiency and trust within the chain.

Correspondence to: Lysander Quillan, Department of Marine Resource Economics, Northern Coastline University, Halifax, Canada, E-mail: lysander.quillan@ncu.ca

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Collaboration among stakeholders is essential for improving value chain performance. Farmer cooperatives, industry associations, and partnerships with research institutions can enhance knowledge sharing and resource access. Collective action often leads to better bargaining power and improved market opportunities for smaller producers. Aquaculture value chain analysis provides a comprehensive view of how aquatic

products move from production to consumption. By examining each stage and identifying areas for improvement, stakeholders can enhance efficiency, increase value, and support sustainable development. As demand for aquatic products continues to grow, strengthening value chain dynamics will remain an important focus for ensuring food security and economic stability.