



Advancing American Open Ocean Aquaculture

# The MARA Act

Sponsored by Senator Brian Schatz (D-HI) and Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS)

The Marine Aquaculture Research for America (MARA) Act is a significant step toward establishing safe and sustainable open ocean aquaculture in the United States. This bipartisan legislation promotes a stakeholder-led approach that ensures aquaculture is safe, sustainable, and grounded in scientific evidence.

## About the MARA Act

The MARA Act creates a comprehensive framework for advancing sustainable open ocean aquaculture in the U.S. by prioritizing strong safety and environmental standards, enhancing community benefits, and investing in workforce development and scientific research. Key components include:

- ✓ **Streamlined Regulatory Framework:** Formally establishes NOAA's Office of Aquaculture and designates NOAA as the lead agency for aquaculture permitting demonstration projects, creating a more efficient regulatory process while maintaining rigorous environmental reviews.
- ✓ **Aquaculture Assessment Program:** Establishes a dedicated NOAA aquaculture assessment program that supports commercial-scale demonstration projects.
- ✓ **Environmental & Regulatory Viability Studies:** Commissions studies to assess the environmental and regulatory frameworks for U.S. open ocean aquaculture to provide a scientific basis for decision-making.
- ✓ **Working Waterfronts:** Includes provisions for workforce development programs and support for working waterfronts, promoting economic opportunities within coastal communities.
- ✓ **Aquaculture Centers of Excellence:** Establishes Aquaculture Centers of Excellence at educational institutions, including minority-serving institutions, to advance research, innovation, and education in sustainable aquaculture practices.
- ✓ **Traditional Knowledge:** Incorporates traditional Tribal and Indigenous knowledge into the assessment and regulatory processes, fostering collaboration and inclusivity.

## Strong Benefits for U.S. Seafood Production

Americans want high-quality, healthy seafood that is locally and responsibly sourced. However, the U.S. imports the vast majority of our seafood from abroad—half of which is farmed, sometimes with inadequate environmental and labor standards. The MARA Act will help develop commercial-scale projects to foster a responsible and innovative aquaculture industry while prioritizing environmental protections and community benefits. By increasing domestic seafood production through sustainable offshore aquaculture, the bill aims to reduce reliance on imports and enhance food security. By working together, we can foster a resilient and responsible aquaculture industry that benefits both people and the planet.

## Broad Bipartisan Support for the MARA Act

The MARA Act—introduced by **Senators Brian Schatz (D-HI)** and **Roger Wicker (R-MS)**, has bipartisan support from 74 environmental organizations, industry leaders, chefs, fishermen, and scientists. This broad coalition underscores a shared commitment to advancing sustainable aquaculture that benefits communities, the environment, and the economy.



To learn more about the MARA Act, scan the QR code or visit <http://coalitionforsustainableaquaculture.org/mara/>