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How much fish and other seafood do you eat a year? If you answered ‘a lot’, you are not alone. The average American now consumes as much as 16.6 pounds of seafood every year. This average has been on the increase for years, and shows no real signs of slowing down; why should it? Fish and shellfish are a very healthy protein source, most everyone agrees on this, and it tastes good. Have you ever wondered where it comes from, or where it might come from in the future as this demand grows?

Aquaculture is a likely option. The term ‘aquaculture’ has been increasingly used, but what does it mean? In general, it indicates an aquatic animal (fish, shellfish, etc.) was farm-raised or ‘grown’ as opposed to wild caught. Examples of products that are grown include the catfish, salmon, clams, oysters, and shrimp. Both freshwater (aquaculture) and saltwater (mariculture) animals can be, and are grown for the food market. More than 35% of the global fish and seafood supply are from aquaculture.

Where are these farms you may ask? They are all over the world, look at the label next time you are at the market, it will tell you. Much of it is imported into the US. Some estimates show that Americans import 70% of all the seafood they eat, and of this, 50% is farm raised. Trade deficit is another common term, and in the case of seafood, we import \$8 billion more than we export every year.

With the growing demand for aquatic protein sources not only in this country but around the world, as much as 40 million additional tons are thought to be needed in the next twenty-five years. Aquaculture will be a key supply source to fill this demand. It is already playing a significant role as a seafood source around the globe. With proper management practices that are vital to the future of aquaculture, it can provide consumers with an additional source of aquatic protein that is produced both efficiently and in an environmentally friendly manner.

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