



Genetically Engineered Salmon in Canada

The world's first genetically engineered (genetically modified or GM) food animal is a GM Atlantic salmon, now sold in Canada and the United States.

In February 2023, the US company AquaBounty announced that it will stop producing its genetically engineered (genetically modified or GM) salmon in Canada. The company will continue to produce GM salmon at its remaining “tank farm” in Indiana, US. The US and Canada are the only countries where GM salmon is currently being sold.

- Canada was the first country in the world where GM salmon was sold, starting in 2017 (from a small pilot plant in Panama).
- Some GM salmon may still be sold in Canada, but it is not labelled for consumers.
- Starting in 2021, some GM salmon was produced in Canada (in P.E.I.) but this production was stopped in 2023.
- All the GM salmon in the world is now produced in Indiana, US, by the company AquaBounty.
- AquaBounty is building a new facility in Ohio, US.
- AquaBounty produces all of its GM salmon eggs in P.E.I.

The GM Salmon

The Atlantic salmon is genetically engineered to grow faster using a growth hormone gene from Chinook salmon and genetic material from ocean pout.

AquaBounty stops Canadian production

In February 2023, the company AquaBounty announced that, after raising only two “cohorts” of GM salmon at the world’s first purpose-built GM fish factory in Rollo Bay, Prince Edward Island (P.E.I.), Canada, it will stop producing GM salmon at that location.

AquaBounty only finished construction of the world’s first purpose-built GM fish factory at Rollo Bay in 2019. The first GM salmon was “harvested” there in 2021.

The on-land Rollo Bay site has the capacity to produce 250 metric tons of fish each year, on a total area of almost 41 acres. The construction cost was estimated at \$13-million. AquaBounty also has a small, older research and development facility in P.E.I. at Bay Fortune.

- Instead of growing GM salmon, the P.E.I site at Rollo Bay will now be used to **produce non-GM salmon** as well as **non-GM salmon eggs** for sale to aquaculture companies.
- However, AquaBounty will continue to produce **GM salmon eggs** in P.E.I., for grow-out at its GM salmon factory in Indiana, US.

AquaBounty is still producing GM salmon at its “tank farm” in Albany in Indiana, US, which is capable of raising 1,200 metric tons of GM salmon each year. AquaBounty is also in the first stages of constructing a larger plant in Ohio, with capacity to produce 10,000 metric tons of fish each year.

GM Salmon Still Sold in Canada

“Our plan is to follow the guidelines in Canada which is we don’t have to label.” – Sylvia Wulf, CEO, AquaBounty

A small amount of GM salmon could still be sold as food in Canada.

GM salmon filets from Indiana could be sold anywhere in Canada. Earlier records, tracked down through Access to Information requests, show that most of the GM salmon was sold into the foodservice sector, such as restaurants or catering, with some going into grocery stores.

In 2022, the Ontario/Quebec grocery chain Metro made a public commitment in its Corporate Responsibility Plan 2022-2026 that it will not sell the GM salmon.

If I want to avoid eating GM salmon, what salmon should I buy?

- Buy only wild salmon – do not buy farmed salmon.
- Do not buy salmon.
- Ask your grocery store and restaurant. The grocery chains Metro, Loblaw and Costco do not sell GM salmon. See www.cban.ca/grocerychainranking

TIMELINE

2013: The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change Canada approved commercial production of GM salmon and salmon eggs, in land-based facilities.

2014: The Government of Panama fined AquaBounty for violating environmental regulations at their pilot plant.

2016: Health Canada approved the GM salmon for human consumption.

2016: The Federal Court of Canada ruled that the Minister’s 2013 decision only applies to AquaBounty’s Bay Fortune P.E.I. facility, triggering a new risk assessment for AquaBounty’s planned Rollo Bay facility.

2017: The world’s first shipment of GM salmon (4.5 tonnes from Panama) arrived in Québec.

2017: The Government of Prince Edward Island approved construction of AquaBounty’s first purpose-built GM salmon “tank farm,” on land at Rollo Bay.

2018: The world’s second world shipment (4.5 tonnes from Panama) arrived in Québec.

2019: The Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada approved production of GM salmon at AquaBounty’s facility at Rollo Bay, P.E.I.

2021: AquaBounty “harvested” its first GM salmon produced in P.E.I.

2023: AquaBounty announced it will no longer produce GM salmon at its facility in Rollo Bay, P.E.I.

For more information and details: www.cban.ca/fish



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The Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CBAN) brings together 15 groups to research, monitor and raise awareness about issues relating to genetic engineering in food and farming. CBAN members include farmer associations, environmental and social justice organizations, and regional coalitions of grassroots groups. CBAN is a project on MakeWay’s shared platform.