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Global Freshwater Trout Aquaculture Standards Released for Public Comment

WASHINGTON, DC: Draft standards that will help minimize the potential negative impact freshwater trout aquaculture can have on the environment and society were released today for the first of two public comment periods. The freshwater trout aquaculture industry is responsible for producing most of the freshwater trout eaten worldwide.

The standards, which address such impacts as water pollution and the transfer of diseases to other fish, are the product of the Freshwater Trout Aquaculture Dialogue. The 200-person roundtable includes trout aquaculture industry leaders, scientists, conservationists and others from the world's leading trout producing countries, including Italy, Denmark, the United Kingdom, the United States and Spain.

The Dialogue is producing the first global standards for freshwater aquaculture created through an open, transparent process that is aligned with the International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labeling Alliance's renowned guidelines for creating standards. The process encourages input from a broad and diverse group of people and ensures that their ideas will be considered by the eight-person Steering Committee responsible for managing the Dialogue.

"People from all over the world and with all types of aquaculture-related expertise helped create the draft standards that are now available for public comment," said Christoph Mathiesen of World Wildlife Fund (WWF), who coordinates the Dialogue. "If we had not made the process so inclusive and transparent, we wouldn't have a draft document that is as strong as it is."

Numerous multi-day Dialogue meetings geared toward sharing information and discussing ideas on how to shape the standards have been held in freshwater trout producing regions since the process began in November 2008. Draft standards created

as a result of these meetings require such things as using responsibly-produced feed and reducing the amount of effluent coming from trout farms.

“We have tried to engage a lot of people in the process and, while we have made some progress, it is very important that we get input from more trout producers,” said Dialogue Steering Committee member David Bassett, a representative of the British Trout Association. “During the public comment periods, we are hoping to receive the advice and guidance we need to improve the first draft of the document so we end up with a meaningful set of standards.”

The first comment period will end on September 27, 2010. The second comment period will begin approximately two months later. The Dialogue participants hope to finalize the standards by the end of 2010.

The start of the public comment period is a major milestone for the Aquaculture Dialogues, a set of eight roundtables working to create measurable and performance-based standards for responsible aquaculture. Five sets of draft standards (pangasius, abalone, shrimp and bivalves, as well as freshwater trout) are in the process of being reviewed or finalized. One set of standards (tilapia) is finalized. All of the standards are expected to be completed within approximately six months.

The standards will be amended periodically to reflect changes in science and technology, as well as to encourage innovation and continuous improvement. These revisions will be coordinated by the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), the new entity being developed to manage the standards, and the process will include many of the Dialogue participants.

For more information about the freshwater trout Dialogue and to provide feedback during the public comment period, go to www.worldwildlife.org/troutdialogue

For more than 45 years, WWF has been protecting the future of nature. The largest multinational conservation organization in the world, WWF works in 100 countries and is supported by 1.2 million members in the United States and close to 5 million globally. WWF's unique way of working combines global reach with a foundation in science, involves action at every level, from local to global, and ensures the delivery of innovative solutions that meet the needs of both people and nature. Go to worldwildlife.org to learn more.

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