



### *Greenways Land Trust*

Greenways Land Trust is a registered charity and conservation organization that works to enhance the community through creation and management of greenways networks, based on principles of stream and land stewardship in Campbell River, British Columbia. We act as an umbrella organization that works together with local stewardship groups, community organizations and local governments. Our mission is to restore, sustain and protect natural areas and critical habitats, particularly ecological and recreational greenways, for the benefit of our community.

Since 2015, Greenways has been the designated Island Health Food Security Networking Hub for the Strathcona Region, and in this capacity, has developed the Strathcona Food Network, a grassroots network aiming to enhance food security throughout the communities of the Strathcona Regional District.

### *Funders/Partners*

- BC Healthy Communities – Plan H
- Strathcona Regional District
- Strathcona Food Security Network
- Strathcona Community Health Network

This project was funded by the Healthy Communities Capacity Building Fund (HCCBF). The HCCBF is part of PlanH, a partnership between BC Healthy Communities Society and Healthy Families BC (the Province's health promotion strategy), and is informed by health authorities and other stakeholders. The PlanH program facilitates local government learning, partnership development and planning for healthier communities where we live, learn, work and play.

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## Executive Summary

The benefits of eating fresh seafood are well documented. Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide recommends that adults and children eat at least 2 servings of fish each week. However, research undertaken by the Strathcona Food Security Project in 2014 indicated that residents of remote communities in the Strathcona Regional District, despite their proximity to major fisheries, do not have access to locally-landed seafood. Seafood is often landed at the local dock and immediately transported to major centres for processing, with no direct sales from fishermen to local consumers. These residents also often lack access to sports-fishing opportunities due to the cost of sports-fishing (purchase of boats, tackle, etc).

Developing the ability to provide direct sales from commercial fishermen to consumers of healthy, nutritious seafood may address food security issues in remote communities, as well as potentially increasing economic development opportunities for local commercial fishermen. This project was undertaken to better understand the production, processing, distribution, availability and affordability of locally-landed seafood and where interventions may be made to reduce barriers to this rich local resource.

The main method of research undertaken for this project was to conduct surveys targeting commercial fishermen in the region. A total of 14 responses to the survey were obtained. Results indicate that there is a strong interest from commercial fishermen to expand their product range and conduct direct sales. Barriers identified to allow more direct sales include the cost of commercial licences, uncertainty about regulations, and lack of skills in marketing.

Recommendations put forward to improve access to seafood in the Strathcona Regional District include:

- Public education about the real cost of seafood
- Further engagement with provincial agencies and advocating for clear, well-publicised guidelines on boat to table regulations
- Education for those in the fishing industry on regulations for off-vessel vending and customer connections/marketing techniques
- A large-scale project researching the commercial fisheries licencing system and whether changes would facilitate an increase in direct sales

Focussing on these areas will alleviate some of the major barriers limiting access to locally-landed seafood in our region, and potentially beyond into other remote and rural communities throughout BC.

Given the interest in accessing local seafood, not only in our region but across the island, we hope this research project into the barriers to accessing local seafood will be the beginning, with more projects and resources that address this important food security concern to come.

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## Introduction

In 2013/2014 the Strathcona Food Security Project conducted research into the food security of remote and regional communities in the Strathcona Regional District (SRD). This research found that residents of remote communities in the District, despite their proximity to major fisheries, have limited access to locally-landed seafood. The Boat to Table Project was initiated to investigate these barriers and suggest pathways to increase the availability of locally-sourced seafood.

Developing the ability to provide direct sales from commercial fishermen to consumers of healthy, nutritious seafood may address food security issues in remote communities, as well as potentially increasing economic development opportunities for local commercial fishermen, including two of the five Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations whose territories are within the Regional District (Ehattesaht and Mowachaht/Muchalaht) who have recently won the right to a specific Aboriginal Commercial Fishery through the Supreme Court of Canada. The aim of this project is to better understand the production, processing, distribution, availability and affordability of locally-landed seafood and where interventions may be made to reduce barriers to this rich local resource.

This study provides a snapshot into off-vessel vending of local seafood in the SRD, while exploring the associated challenges and limitations identified by commercial fishermen themselves. Many of these issues are coast-wide and much larger-scale than this study had the capacity to address. Addressing the barriers identified in through this project are a first step in facilitating easier access to local seafood in British Columbia.

## Method

The main method of research undertaken for this project was a survey targeting commercial fishermen in the region. Example of the survey is provided in Appendix A and survey responses are summarised in Appendix B.

Greenways Land Trust conducted stakeholder engagement in developing the survey, this included harbour authorities, government agencies, Strathcona Food Security Hub, public health and aboriginal health dieticians, as well as local fishers, and provincial agencies. The survey was available both online and in hard-copy at locations frequented by fishermen in the Strathcona Regional District. Many of these locations include small communities that experience food insecurity and which have limited access to grocery stores.

### Online Surveys

Online surveys were available for completion between the 12<sup>th</sup>- 30<sup>th</sup> of June, 2017. The link to the survey was shared using social media and circulated by email with the help of various contacts in the region, including the Strathcona Community Health Network and Regional Harbour Authorities. The Campbell River Fisherman's Wharf, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, A-tlegay Fisheries Society, as well as the Provincial Fisheries Inspector were instrumental in helping to circulate the survey throughout the region. Through social media alone, the survey was viewed by 5,811 individuals. Surveys were separated into the following sections; product range, interest in selling fish from the boat, logistics, and marketing. Those who were not interested in selling fish from their boat were given a chance to submit and end the survey early.

### Hard-Copy Surveys

Printed versions of the surveys were distributed throughout Campbell River during June 2017. These were dispersed at locations that held potential as places that commercial fishermen may frequent.

Locations of hard copy surveys:

- A-tlegay Fisheries Society
- Campbell River Fisherman's Wharf
- Redden Net Co Ltd
- Ocean Pacific Marine Supply and Boatyard
- Kwakiutl District Council Health Center

### Interviews

Telephone interviews were conducted with contacts involved in the commercial fishing industry. In order to finalise the survey prior to circulating among commercial fishermen, and helped gather

background knowledge regarding rules, regulations, and licensing for off-vessel vending. The main points of these interviews are summarised in Appendix C.

## Results

- The total number of respondents for the online surveys was 14, no responses were received via hard copy.
- Only one respondent reported fishing in Sayward, Gold River, and Zeballos.
- 85.7% of respondents would want to fish for additional species, however, 75% of respondents reported that they could not access commercial license due to the cost.
- 50% responded that they do not currently sell fish from their boat. 40% of those who responded that they did not currently sell fish from their boat said that they would be interested in doing so.
- Those who responded that they were not interested gave the following comments: “too much demand for good quality from companies;” “the population in Vancouver will pay premium price;” and “after 50+ years in the industry, I have no interest in public sales, don’t wish to spend time to do so properly, and barely catch enough product to fulfill the requests of family and friends as it is.”
- When asked if they were easily able to access rules and regulations for selling fish from the boat, 45.5% responded yes. However, 36.4% responded they had never tried.
- When asked if it is a challenge to inform customers when they have product available, 36.4% responded yes. When asked why, respondents stated: “street advertising, social media, local radio and newsprint are very limited or expensive;” “lack of good cell coverage;” and “not allowed to post signs.”



## Do you currently sell products directly from your boat?

14 responses

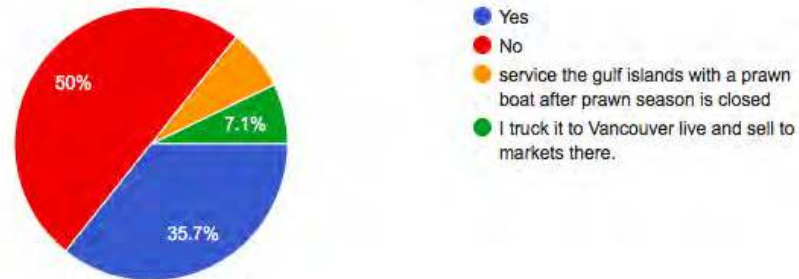


Figure 1. Graph displaying that 50% of survey respondents do not sell products directly from their boat

## Our research has shown demand from community members for fresh seafood - as a provider of seafood, have you seen or felt this demand?

11 responses

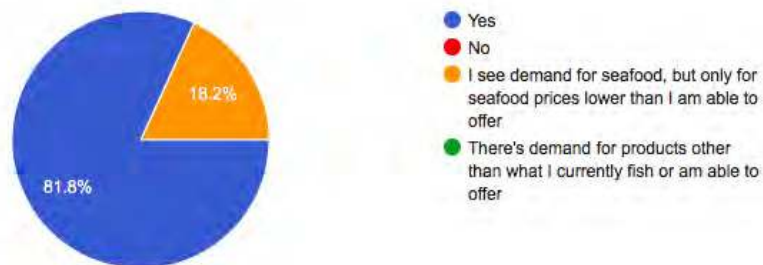


Figure 2: Graph displaying that 81.8% of survey respondents feel a demand for fresh seafood from the community

## Discussion

### Methodology Limitations

It is important to note the low response rate of the surveys. This was likely in part due to the timing of survey circulation (June), which coincides with a very busy time for fishermen. In addition, the method

of research is likely to lead to at least some positive confirmation bias, e.g. only members of the targeted audience who are interested in the topic would be likely to fill out the survey. In addition, this survey targeted current commercial fishermen, and another group, *potential* commercial fishermen, were not included and could have valuable information that would inform the issue further. However, those who did complete the survey did so in a very telling manner, which helped this study develop preliminary data and results. The results from this small-scale study are a small piece of a much larger puzzle and can hopefully be used as a starting off point for action and engagement in future.

It is also important to note that although the focus area of the project is Sayward, Zeballos, Tahsis and Gold River, there was only one respondent who explicitly said they fished in this area. It was difficult to gain feedback from fishers in this area as it was difficult to come in contact with them. The Campbell River Fisherman's Wharf shared the survey with every harbour authority along the coast, and yet the majority of respondents reported fishing in Campbell River, Port Hardy, and Port Alberni.

#### Public Education – The Real Cost of Seafood

As displayed in Figure 2, the demand for fresh and locally-caught seafood is certainly being noticed by commercial fishermen. However, some survey respondents and interviewees shared their thoughts that local consumers don't understand the cost of freshly fished products. Our research suggests that more time and resources should be put into educating the public regarding the real cost of locally-landed seafood. With time, this may help push for a shift in consciousness regarding 'the real cost of food'. Most consumers don't understand the expenses behind the fishing industry, and how much the equipment, licenses, and moorage fees actually cost. A marketing campaign may help them understand why it is worth paying more for a product that was fished in their backyard, rather than shipped from elsewhere in the world. If local consumers were willing to pay more for local seafood, fishermen may feel more encouraged to sell fish locally, rather than in larger city centers. A partnership with the BC Salmon Marketing Council and/or other industry associations may be a possible opportunity to explore.

- Recommendation: Public education about the real cost of seafood

#### Education for fishermen – Rules/regulations and marketing techniques

36.4% of survey respondents reported that they had never tried to access the rules and regulations for selling fish from the boat. In part, this could be due to a lack of interest, however, it is likely than many

find the formal rules and regulations to be confusing and/or too daunting to try, especially those who have been in the industry a long time. We suggest there be education and additional resources for fishermen on the rules and regulations regarding off-vessel vending in British Columbia.

Additionally, 36.4% of respondents said yes when asked if it is a challenge to inform customers when they have product available. Furthermore, 50% of respondents stated that they lack skills in social media, email marketing, or other ways of marketing their products. This alone could be a huge barrier for fishermen who may be interested in selling directly from their boat. Our research suggests that an educational campaign or workshop with a focus on the rules and regulations, and showing fishermen how to market their product to consumers would be extremely beneficial.

- Recommendation: Further engagement with provincial agencies and advocating for clear, well-publicised guidelines on boat to table regulations
- Recommendation: Education for those in the fishing industry on regulations for off-vessel vending and customer connections/marketing techniques

#### Financial barriers for fishers trying to expand their product range

85.7% of respondents reported that they would want to fish for additional species, however, 75% reported that they could not access a commercial license for additional species due to cost. Some of these costs are due to the system of commercial licencing currently in place. For example, research by Ecotrust Canada has found that many fishermen in certain fisheries “who were gifted quota when the catch share system was first introduced have elected to retain their allocation after retiring from fishing, leasing the quota rather than selling it to new entrants” (p. 18)<sup>1</sup>. The retired fishermen tend to lease quota to corporations or processors that are able to pay higher prices. This means that the fishermen who can’t afford to buy quota are left in a challenging position, in which many are unable to expand their product range as desired. It is also a large barrier to entry to the industry for potential commercial fishermen that may be interested in different ways of marketing the product, including selling locally.

Although this is affecting local people on many levels, it is a very complex and large-scale issue. Changing the commercial licencing system to make it more cost-effective for small-scale producers is a

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<sup>1</sup> Caught up in Catch Shares, retrieved from [http://www.bucksuzuki.org/images/uploads/docs/EcotrustCanada\\_CaughtUpInCatchShares.pdf](http://www.bucksuzuki.org/images/uploads/docs/EcotrustCanada_CaughtUpInCatchShares.pdf)

political decision that will require significant advocacy efforts. In addition, it may be that the higher prices that can be obtained by fishermen by selling direct rather than to a processor/distributor may compensate for high licence fees, similar to how small-scale organic fruit and vegetable producers that sell direct at farmer's markets are able to make their business models work in comparison to conventional agricultural production. Further research into this issue, potentially by developing various demonstration business cases, could be instructive to potential entrants to the industry, as well as current commercial fishermen wishing to expand their product line or methods of marketing.

- Recommendation: A large-scale project researching the commercial fisheries licencing system and whether changes would facilitate an increase in direct sales

## Conclusion

Although less surveys were completed than we hoped, the responses proved to be very insightful. Those who did complete the survey were enthusiastic and provided meaningful comments and feedback from commercial fishermen themselves. Through the survey development we developed relationships with those involved at both an industry and regulatory level. The research found there is significant interest from both producers and consumers in direct sales of seafood, although current barriers such as understanding regulations, commercial fishing licencing, and lack of awareness of the cost of seafood are limiting this market activity.

We are hopeful that the information collected and recommendations will be useful in making a case for greater collaboration with provincial and federal agencies in streamlining protocols and better communicating relevant regulations to those interested in selling from the boat.

The following recommendations are put forward as future actions to improve access to seafood in the region:

- Public education about the real cost of seafood
- Further engagement with provincial agencies and advocating for clear, well-publicised guidelines on boat to table regulations
- Education for those in the fishing industry on regulations for off-vessel vending and customer connections/marketing techniques

- A large-scale project researching the commercial fisheries licencing system and whether changes would facilitate an increase in direct sales

Action in these areas will help to alleviate some of the major barriers limiting access to locally-landed seafood in our region, and potentially beyond into other remote and rural communities throughout BC.

# Appendices

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## Appendix A: Boat to Table Survey

### Boat to Table: Developing Access to Seafood in Remote Communities within the Strathcona Regional District

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Local research has shown that residents in remote communities often find it hard to access locally-landed seafood. This survey aims to pinpoint the limitations and challenges in selling fish at local docks. We want to hear from both fishermen who do and don't sell their fish at local docks. The focus of the project is on Sayward, Zeballos, Tahsis, and Gold River, however, we are interested in the opinions and experiences of all commercial fishermen in BC.

This survey is being conducted by Greenways Land Trust, based in Campbell River, BC. Please see the end of the survey for more details about who we are and what we do.

**Upon completion of the survey, please return this form to the Greenways office at 1195-C Fir Street, Campbell River.**

If you prefer to complete this survey online, follow the link below:

<https://goo.gl/forms/btwRekckquUCelrp1>

#### Product Range

**1. What do you currently commercially fish?**

- Salmon
- Tuna
- Prawns
- Shrimp
- Halibut
- Herring
- Sardine
- Crab
- Sea urchin
- Hake
- Rockfish
- Geoduck
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Where do you land your fish?**

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**3. Would you want to fish for additional species?**

- Yes
- No

**4. If yes, what barriers do you face in expanding your product range?**

- Cannot access commercial license due to cost
- Cannot access commercial license due to availability
- Cannot access funds for equipment needed
- Facilities at docks are not sufficient (off-loading, etc.)
- Lack of demand
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. What costs are associated with your fishery?**

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**Interest in selling fish from the boat**

**6. How do you currently sell your product?**

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**7. Do you currently sell products directly from your boat?**

- Yes
- No
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**8. If not, are you interested in selling your products directly from your boat?**

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

**9. If not, can you explain why not?**

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If you are not interested in selling products directly from your boat, you may finish the survey here. Thank you for your time. If you are interested in selling directly from your boat, please continue the survey.

## **Logistics**

**10. Are you easily able to access rules and regulations for selling fish from the boat?**

- Yes
  - I have never tried
  - No, I can't access the formal rules and regulations
  - No, I can't understand the formal rules and regulations
  - Other:
- 

**11. Do you feel that selling fish from the boat is supported by your local Harbour Authority or Dock Manager?**

- Yes
  - No
  - Maybe
  - Only some of the docks where I land fish
  - Other:
- 

**12. Is it a challenge to inform customers when you have product available?**

- Yes
- No

**13. If yes, why?**

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## **Marketing**

**14. Do you think you need to market your product to consumers?**

- Yes
  - No
  - Other:
- 

**15. Do you feel you know *how* to market your product to local consumers?**

- Yes
- No

**16. What barriers do you face in marketing your product to local consumers?**

- Lack skills in social media, email marketing or other ways of marketing
- Limited support from Dock Managers in posting signage
- Lack overall marketing resources



- Other:
- 

**17. Would you be interested in developing a \*Community Supported Fishery or a similar community-based program?**

\* A CSF is a program that connects fishermen to a local market and is based on the model of Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA). This sort of program aims to strengthen relationships between fishermen and communities. "In a CSF, customers pre-pay for a "season" of fresh, local, low-impact seafood, and in turn they receive a weekly or bi-weekly share of fish or shellfish." ([localcatch.org](http://localcatch.org))

- Yes
  - No
  - Maybe
  - Other:
- 

**18. Our research has shown demand from community members for fresh seafood – as a provider of seafood, have you seen or felt this demand?**

- Yes
  - No
  - I see demand for seafood, but only for seafood prices lower than I am able to offer
  - There's demand for products other than what I currently fish or am able to offer
  - Other:
- 

**19. Is there anything else you would like us to know?**

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**Upon completion of this survey, please return this form to the Greenways office at 1195-C Fir Street, Campbell River. For more information on this project, please contact [alanna@greenwaystrust.ca](mailto:alanna@greenwaystrust.ca) or call 250-287-3785. Thank you for your time.**

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**Additional Information**

**BC Vending Regulations:**

To read about BC's Fish and Seafood Act, please visit the following link:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/fisheries-and-aquaculture/seafood-industry-licensing/2017-fish-and-seafood-act>

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**Greenways Land Trust:**

Greenways Land Trust is an environmental charity based out of Campbell River. We work with the Strathcona Food Action Committee to develop networks and partnerships to address food security issues in the Strathcona Region, and build on the work of the Strathcona Food Security Project. This project, Access to Seafood, is part of the overarching goal to improve overall food security in the region.

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Check out our website: <http://www.greenwaystrust.ca/>

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## Appendix B: Summary of Survey Responses

### Product Range

**1. What do you commercially fish?**

- 76.9% - Salmon
- 15.4% - Tuna
- 38.5% - Prawns
- 7.7% - Shrimp
- 30.8% - Halibut
- 23.1% - Herring
- 0% - Hake
- 30.8% - Rockfish
- 7.7% - Geoduck
- 7.7% - Goose necks
- 7.7% - Lingcod

**2. Where do you land your fish?**

- Port Hardy, Quadra Island, and Campbell River
- Campbell River and West Coast
- On the fishing ground, as well as dock delivery at Campbell River
- Port Alberni, Campbell River
- Post McNeill and CR
- Various island locations
- Port Hardy, Bella Coola, Campbell River
- Sayward, Gold River, Zeballos
- Port Hardy
- Port Hardy, Ucluelet
- At the highest bidder

**3. Would you want to fish for additional species?**

- 85.7% responded yes
- 14.3% responded no

**4. If yes, what barriers do you face in expanding your product range?**

- 75% responded that they cannot access commercial license due to cost
- 41.7% responded that they cannot access commercial license due to availability
- 16.7% responded that they cannot access funds for equipment needed
- 8.3% responded “too many poaching”

**5. What costs are associated with your fishery?**

Responses to the questions ranged from:

- Gear, licensing, monitoring, offloading, crew, fuel, deckhands, nets, maintenance, leasing quota, management fees, communications, accounting, fuel, insurance, electronics, ice, unloading and validation
- “Leasing quota from wealthy investment firms that are buying it all up”

**Interest in selling fish from the boat**

**6. How do you currently sell your product?**

- Deliver to fishing company as they take larger volumes
- Off-vessel
- Through a broker or fish processor
- To commercial fish buyers
- In the can, frozen, or smoked
- Boat and personally at markets
- Private buyers and independent broker
- Fishing companies
- Through Taqwiaq
- Companies
- One buyer
- To companies and private sales

**7. Do you currently sell products directly from your boat?**

- 50% responded no
- 35.7% responded yes
- 7.1% responded “service the Gulf Islands with a prawn boat after prawn season is closed”
- 7.1% responded “I truck it to Vancouver live and sell to markets there”

**8. If not, are you interested in selling your products directly from your boat?**

- 40% responded yes
- 30% responded no

- 30% responded maybe

**9. If no, can you explain why not?**

- “Too much demand for good quality from companies”
- “Unfortunately, the . . . population in Vancouver will pay premium price, more”
- “After 50+ years in the industry, I have no interest in public sales, don’t wish to spend the time to do so properly, and barely catch enough product to fulfill the requests of family and friends as it is”

**Logistics**

**10. Are you easily able to access rules and regulations for selling fish from the boat?**

- 45.5% responded yes
- 36.4% responded “I have never tried”
- 9.1% responded “no, I can’t understand the formal rules and regulations”
- 9.1% responded “rules change from year to year”

**11. Do you feel that selling fish from the boat is supported by your local Harbour Authority or Dock Manager?**

- 54.5% responded yes
- 9.1% responded no
- 18.2% responded maybe
- 18.2% responded “only some of the docks where I land fish”

**12. Is it a challenge to inform customers when you have product available?**

- 36.4% responded yes
- 63.6% responded no

**13. If yes, why?**

- “Street advertising, social media, local radio and newsprint are very limited or expensive”
- “Lack of good cell coverage”
- “Not allowed to post signs”

**Marketing**

**14. Do you think you *need* to market your product to consumers?**

- 81.8% responded yes
- 9.1% responded no
- 9.1% responded “I already do”

**15. Do you feel you know *how* to market your product to local consumers?**

- 54.5% responded yes
- 45.5% responded no

**16. What barriers do you face in marketing your product to local consumers?**

- 50% responded “lack skills in social media, email marketing, or other ways of marketing”
- 37.5% responded they “lack overall marketing resources”
- 12.5% responded “limited from Dock Manager’s in posting signage”
- 12.5% responded “consumer doesn’t understand cost associated”
- 12.5% responded “availability”

**17. Would you be interested in developing a \*Community Supported Fishery or similar community-based program?**

- 45.5% responded yes
- 36.4% responded maybe
- 9.1% responded no
- 9.1% responded “I market it already”

**18. Our research has shown demand from community members for fresh seafood – as a provider of seafood, have you seen or felt this demand?**

- 81.8% responded yes
- 18.2% responded “I see demand for seafood, but only seafood prices lower than I am able to offer”

**19. Is there anything else you would like us to know?**

- “It would be nice to show how the fish gets to market including the costs associated with it, more people are starting to buy direct from the source instead of overseas products. There are also some fisheries (geoduck for example) that you are not allowed to sell dockside, this is something that should be looked into.”
  - “There is a group that collects money from the landed value of salmon (FISHERMEN PAYS). Salmon Marketing Council of B.C. Their job is to expand markets for wild B.C. Salmon. However, my opinion is there efforts benefit the fish buyers not the fishermen, as it’s the buyer that sells the fish to market yet it’s the fisherman that pays for that.”
  - “It’s hard to separate local legal sales from local illegal sales... Which happens a lot at a lower price so customers don’t want to pay for legal product”
-

## Appendix C: Notes from interviews

### Provincial Fisheries Inspector

- The Provincial Fisheries Inspector informed us that commercial fishermen can now buy a vending licence for \$30 to legally be able to transport their fish to a licenced facility, where their fish can be sold to the general public. To read about BC's new Fish and Seafood Act, visit the following link: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/fisheries-and-aquaculture/seafood-industry-licensing/2017-fish-and-seafood-act>

### CR Fisherman's Wharf

- Campbell River Fisherman's Wharf provided us with some valuable insight regarding the commercial fishing community. They said that "vessel off sales are becoming more and more frequent as people are realizing fresh is best. There are some fisheries that are not permitted to sell dockside, which is a hindrance as there is a market for it."
- They also suggested we add additional information on the Community Supported Fisheries question in the survey, as they believed many of the respondents may not have had prior knowledge on this topic.