

Public-Private Clean Production Agreement:**CAMANCHACA AND FIVE OTHER CHILEAN SALMON FARMING COMPANIES LAUNCH UNPRECEDENTED INITIATIVE TO PROTECT THE BLUE WHALE**

- ***The salmon farming industry—represented by Camanchaca, AquaChile, Blumar, Los Fiordos, Multiexport and Ventisqueros—in conjunction with the Chilean government and civic and academic groups, signed a Clean Production Agreement to implement blue whale watching and monitoring efforts in the Gulf of Corcovado.***
- ***They will also adopt production practices designed to improve conservation of the local ecosystem and prevent and mitigate impact in areas surrounding salmon fishing operations.***

On October 5, 2015, a Clean Production Agreement (CPA) entitled "*Conservation of the Blue Whale and Large Cetaceans in Northern Patagonia in the Los Lagos and Aysén Regions*" was signed as part of the Second Our Ocean Conference held in Valparaíso.

The agreement brings together and secures a commitment from several institutions: Chilean-based salmon farming companies that are members of the Global Salmon Initiative (GSI)—Camanchaca, AquaChile, Blumar, Los Fiordos, Multiexport and Ventisqueros; the Undersecretary of Fishing; the National Fisheries Service; the Chilean Development Corporation (CORFO); the Directorate General of Maritime Territory and Merchant Marines; the Blue Whale Center (*Centro Ballena Azul*); Universidad Austral de Chile and WWF Chile, the global conservation organization. These institutions were all led by the National Council for Clean Production.

The objective of the initiative is for participating companies to adopt production practices designed to improve conservation of the local ecosystem and prevent and mitigate impact in the areas surrounding salmon fishing operations. The agreement will initially last 36 months, although it is expected to be extended to span 10 years in order to generate scientific studies and improve local research capabilities. The funds, a total of US\$250,000 per year, will come primarily from the participating salmon farming companies.

Regarding the initiative, Ricardo García, Camanchaca's CEO, confirmed that this agreement will leverage the participating companies' operations in Chile's south seas in benefit of the blue whale. He also remarked, "*These six Chilean companies, which are part of the Global Salmon Initiative (GSI) and are clearly committed to sustainable salmon production, are a natural fit for this initiative, embarking on a long-term commitment to protect and conserve this marine species.*"

The Ministry of Economy, Luis Felipe Céspedes, stressed the relevance of this voluntary agreement, since the government recognizes the value to the eco-region of conserving the blue whale and other large cetaceans by drafting, implementing and promoting a formal conservation and monitoring program in northern Patagonia. The minister also highlighted the participating salmon farming companies and commented, "*They have committed to adopting socially and environmentally responsible production models, which translates into progressively certifying their farming sites in northern Patagonia under the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) standard.*"

Meanwhile, the executive director of the National Council for Clean Production, Juan Ladrón de Guevara, remarked that this agreement is the first strong public-private alliance created to protect the blue whale, which makes it very special. "*For our council, cooperation, trust and willingness are highly efficient tools for addressing challenges such as these and we are convinced that the commitments made will be beneficial for both the whale's ecosystem and the companies operating there,*" he confirmed.

The director of WWF Chile, Ricardo Bosshard, expressed his approval of this public-private agreement since it attained concrete commitments from the salmon industry to protect one of the WWF global network's priority species. "*After the efforts by WWF in leading the Salmon Dialogues for almost seven years, which aimed to shift the industry towards the adoption of better salmon farming practices and ultimately resulted in the generation of the ASC standards, we have seen how the industry has adopted these environmental and social requirements, first by joining the Global Salmon Initiative (GSI) in 2013, then by committing to certify 70% of its production by 2020, and now by working to prevent and mitigate the industry's impacts on large cetaceans found in the Corcovado area.*"

The History of the Blue Whale in the Gulf of Corcovado

Over twelve years ago, Dr. Rodrigo Hucke-Gaete from the Blue Whale Center, in conjunction with Universidad Austral de Chile, led a series of research studies that identified the area around the Gulf of Corcovado as one of the Southern Hemisphere's most important locations where blue whales feed and raise their young.

"This agreement will allow our scientific research to be used for a purpose as important as generating concrete action plans for reducing and mitigating the impacts of the salmon farming industry, which must be implemented. This agreement will also give us the opportunity to strengthen our monitoring program in order to better understand essential aspects of the life history of the world's largest animals. This agreement can become a worldwide example of collaboration between the private, public and academic sectors," Hucke-Gaete commented.

Throughout the years, research by the Blue Whale Center, Universidad Austral de Chile and other civic organizations such as WWF and the Melimoyu Foundation, among others, have helped generate first-rate information for developing conservation proposals for the area such as a network of Protected Marine Areas in the Gulf of Corcovado, which led to the creation of the Tic-Toc Marine Park in February 2014.