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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Consumer Groups Petition FDA to Ban GE Salmon as an Unsafe Food Additive
Groups say fish couldn't pass proper review

Washington, D.C.—Today consumer groups Food & Water Watch, Consumers Union, and the Center for Food Safety submitted a formal petition asking the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to classify and evaluate AquaBounty's "AquAdvantage" genetically engineered (GE) salmon and all of its components as a food additive. The groups' legal petition contends that the current agency review process that treats GE salmon only as a new animal drug is insufficient to protect public health, and that the agency is required by law to review the GE salmon under what should be a more rigorous process for any novel substance added to food.

"The data FDA has on GE salmon, which were supplied by Aquabounty, are incomplete, biased, and cannot be relied upon to show that the GE salmon is safe to consume," said Food & Water Watch Executive Director Wenonah Hauter. "Aquabounty's own study showed that GE salmon may contain increased levels of IGF-1, a hormone that helps accelerate the growth of the transgenic fish and is linked to breast, colon, prostate, and lung cancer."

The groups warn that the potential health risks of GE salmon are no different from a number of food additives the FDA has banned in the past, including those that are cancer causing.

"FDA's choice to allow the first proposed transgenic animal for food to somehow only be review as a drug is contrary to law, science and common sense," said George Kimbrell, Senior Attorney for the Center for Food Safety. "Public health and transparency should be championed, not skirted, particularly when contemplating such an unprecedented approval."

In order to create the transgenic fish, Aquabounty genetically engineered an Atlantic salmon by inserting a Chinook salmon growth-hormone gene, as well as a gene sequence from an ocean pout. The company claims this engineering causes the GE salmon to undergo an increase in growth rate that allows the fish to reach market size in half the normal time.

Aquabounty has submitted an application to FDA for approval of the transgenic salmon under the new animal drug provisions of the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act. Members of the FDA's own advisory committee have described the agency's review of the GE salmon under this process as lacking in rigor.

The consumer groups' petition asserts that the process used to create the GE salmon substantially alters its composition—including its nutrition value—and demand that the fish and its components be treated as a food additive pursuant to FDA's guidelines. As a food additive, AquaBounty's GE salmon would be considered unsafe for consumption unless the company's data overwhelmingly proved otherwise.

"If FDA actually evaluated GE salmon as a food additive, including allergy-causing potential, they would not likely be able to approve it because of the health risks that have already been seen in an incomplete set of data," said Dr. Michael Hansen, Senior Scientist with Consumers Union, the advocacy arm of Consumer Reports.

The groups assert that a proper review process would require GE salmon to undergo comprehensive toxicological studies, specifically those developed to ensure that foods entering the market are safe to consume and are properly labeled.

To view a copy of the petition, click

here: <http://documents.foodandwaterwatch.org/FDAFoodAdditivePetitionGESalmon.pdf>

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***Food & Water Watch** works to ensure the food, water and fish we consume is safe, accessible and sustainable. So we can all enjoy and trust in what we eat and drink, we help people take charge of where their food comes from, keep clean, affordable, public tap water flowing freely to our homes, protect the environmental quality of oceans, force government to do its job protecting citizens, and educate about the importance of keeping shared resources under public control.*

***The Center for Food Safety** is a national, non-profit, membership organization dedicated to protecting human health and the environment by curbing the use of harmful food production technologies and by promoting organic and other forms of sustainable agriculture. CFS has over 200,000 members across the country and has worked on issues pertaining to genetically engineered fish since 2001.*

***Consumer Reports** is the world's largest independent product-testing organization. Using its more than 50 labs, auto test center, and survey research center, the nonprofit rates thousands of products and services annually. Founded in 1936, Consumer Reports has over 8 million subscribers to its magazine, website, and other publications. Its advocacy division, Consumers Union, works for health reform, food and product safety, financial reform, and other consumer issues in Washington, D.C., the states, and in the marketplace.*