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# Frankenfish Company That Sparked Lawsuit Against FDA Announces End To Genetically Engineered Hatchery Operations

December 16, 2024 [Scott Artis](#)

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## **Frankenfish Company That Sparked Lawsuit Against FDA Announces End To Genetically Engineered Hatchery Operations**

**American Canyon, Calif.** — In a major win for Golden State Salmon Association (GSSA), wild salmon, fishermen, and the environment, AquaBounty Technologies, Inc. announced the closure of its Bay Fortune facility—its last remaining fish farm—marking a decisive moment in the decades-long fight against genetically engineered (GE) salmon. Over the coming weeks, AquaBounty will cull all remaining fish and reduce personnel, signaling the end of its controversial operations.

“This is a victory for our oceans, our health, and the wild salmon that define the heart of fishing communities across North America,” said Scott Artis, Executive Director of the Golden State Salmon Association. “The message is clear: Frankenfish have no place on our plates or in our waters.”

The closure comes after years of intense organizing by a broad coalition of environmental groups, fishermen, Tribes, and consumers. The coalition [challenged](#) the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) 2016 approval of GE salmon, which was developed by AquaBounty using DNA from three fish species: Atlantic salmon, Pacific king salmon, and Arctic eelpout. GSSA highlighted significant environmental and health risks, including the potential for GE salmon to escape, outcompete wild species, and disrupt ecosystems.

“This wasn’t just a fight about fish—it was a fight for the future of our food systems and the survival of wild salmon,” said Artis.

The coalition’s lawsuit against the FDA resulted in a groundbreaking 2020 ruling by the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California. The Court determined that the FDA violated core environmental laws by failing to evaluate the risks posed by GE salmon to wild salmon populations, endangered species, and the broader ecosystem. This decision forced the

FDA to reconsider its analysis and halted AquaBounty's plans to expand the production of GE salmon.

If genetically engineered (GE) salmon were to escape or be unintentionally released into the wild, they could pose significant risks to native populations by breeding with endangered salmon species, competing for limited resources and habitats, or spreading new diseases. Research indicates a substantial likelihood of GE organisms escaping into natural ecosystems, with GE salmon capable of interbreeding with wild fish. In agriculture, transgenic contamination has become a frequent issue, causing U.S. farmers billions of dollars in losses over the last decade. Such contamination could have even more severe consequences in aquatic ecosystems.

At the time of the 2020 ruling, GSSA's John McManus said, "The federal Food and Drug Administration clearly let America down when it chose to overlook the environmental risk these fish pose."

Consumers played a crucial role in driving this victory, rejecting GE salmon in favor of sustainably sourced, wild-caught seafood. Public outcry over the lack of mandatory labeling for GE fish in 2016 led Congress to demand transparency in the food system.

The closure of AquaBounty's Bay Fortune facility signals a turning point in the fight for sustainable seafood and underscores the importance of holding regulatory agencies accountable. For now, the victory serves as a powerful reminder that collective action can protect public health, ecosystems, and the communities that depend on them.

The plaintiff coalition in the 2016 FDA lawsuit, jointly represented by legal counsel from Center for Food Safety and Earthjustice, included Golden State Salmon Association, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, Institute for Fisheries Resources, Kennebec Reborn, Friends of Merrymeeting Bay, Ecology Action Centre, Food & Water Watch, Center for Biological Diversity, Friends of the Earth, Cascadia Wildlands, and Center for Food Safety.

*Golden State Salmon Association ([www.goldenstatesalmon.org](http://www.goldenstatesalmon.org)) is a coalition of salmon advocates that includes commercial and recreational salmon fishermen and women, businesses, restaurants, native tribes, environmentalists, elected officials, families and communities that rely on salmon. GSSA's mission is to restore California salmon for their economic, recreational, commercial, environmental, cultural and health values.*

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