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Statement from the Federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Keith Ashfield and British Columbia Minister of Agriculture, Don McRae on new test results indicating that there are no confirmed cases of ISA in British Columbia Salmon

November 9, 2011

Ottawa, Ontario – Federal officials from the Canada Food Inspection Agency, along with officials from Fisheries and Oceans Canada and British Columbia's Chief Veterinary Officer, provided a technical briefing yesterday on new test results indicating that there are no confirmed cases of Infectious Salmon Anaemia in British Columbia salmon.

The National Reference Laboratory has completed Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) testing, a sensitive but preliminary test, that has shown no presence of ISA in the samples provided; this is the same process that was reportedly used in the original claims of positive test results by individual sources. Officials provided information on the extensive actions underway by the Government of Canada to investigate claims about the presence of the disease, the timeline of test results, and the proper, science-based requirements for testing. Officials also indicated that there will be investigations into the collection, handling, transportation and storage of samples by other sources that led to the original claims.

Minister Ashfield said: "It has been a difficult few weeks for the fishing industry in British Columbia, and across the country, while waiting for these preliminary test results to come back. Because some have chosen to draw conclusions based on unconfirmed information, this has resulted in British Columbia's fishing industry and Canada's reputation being put at risk needlessly.

"Our government takes the health of our fisheries very seriously. We have taken appropriate and immediate action to follow up on the allegations of the presence of ISA in BC waters. We can now confirm that, preliminary analysis, using proper and internationally recognized procedures, has found that none of the samples has tested positive for ISA. In recent years, over 5000 fresh, properly stored and processed salmon have been tested by the BC government and Fisheries and Oceans Canada and there has never been a confirmed case of ISA in British Columbia salmon. An active, science-based sampling program continues for both farmed and wild salmon."

Minister McRae noted: "It is vitally important that we base our policy decisions on sound science so as to preserve and protect BC's reputation as a reliable supplier of high quality seafood to the world. This is particularly true for the dozens of coastal communities that rely on wild and farmed fisheries to feed their families and maintain their way of life. Reckless allegations based on incomplete science can be devastating to these communities and unfair to the families that make a living from the sea. Since Premier Clark is currently on a trade mission to China, I have personally asked her to reassure our valued trading partners that now as always BC can be relied upon as a supplier of safe, sustainable seafood."

Minister Ashfield continued: "Canadian and international partners can be confident that current practices and procedures to protect our wild and farmed salmon industries from disease are in place and working. I will be communicating directly with concerned parties domestically and internationally over the coming weeks to reassure my counterparts, the fishing industry and consumers that BC salmon is healthy and safe."

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