

## Veteran salmon farmer has seen a lot of positive changes

Warren Atleo has worked on the water most of his life, and he wouldn't have it any other way.

"I love it out here. I call it my office outside wherever I am," he says.

Atleo is the lead hand at Cermaq Canada's Westside salmon farm, located on the West Coast of Vancouver Island near Tofino. He's worked as a salmon farmer for 18 years and has seen salmon farming grow into an efficient form of seafood production.

"There have definitely been a lot of improvements," he says. "I used to get a lot of flak and opposition in the past, but not so much now. I've seen a lot of changes through the years, and we're always trying to find ways to make things better."



One big change he's noticed in the last two decades is the way farms feed their fish. In the past, Atleo and other farmers would haul 20 kg bags of feed by hand to the pens for feeding and dump them in by hand. They would only stop when they could see the fish stop eating on the surface, using up to 21 tonnes of feed per day. Apart from being physically demanding, in hindsight, the old methods were also wasteful and not good for the ocean environment.

Today, feed is pumped to each system by compressed air through pipes. Farmers use computers, tablets and underwater cameras to monitor feeding and shut the system down as soon as the fish slow down their eating.

Modern feeding practices save feed – which is the single biggest cost in salmon farming – and reduce impacts.

"If we can all work together as a team, and feed the way we're supposed to be, we minimize the harm to the ocean floor below the sea sites," Atleo says, explaining that these changes allow farmers to grow salmon using less feed than ever before.

During his time in the salmon farming business, Atleo has done many jobs. He's run tugboats, supervised harvests, set up anchoring for farm systems, set up sites for farming and done mechanical work. Today, as lead hand, he enjoys passing on his knowledge to new farmers.

"I try and get them to think, and get them into a frame of mind where they can find ways to do things better," he says.

Atleo has been a valuable employee for Cermaq during the past two decades, and will hopefully continue to share his knowledge and experience with other workers for many years to come.

