

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA**  
**Office of the Governor**

Timothy M. Kaine  
Governor

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**GOVERNOR KAINE ANNOUNCES 60 NEW JOBS IN  
TOWN OF SALTVILLE**

*~ Company first in U.S. to produce fish at inland freshwater facility ~*

**RICHMOND** - Governor Timothy M. Kaine today announced that Virginia Cobia Farms LLC, a joint venture between MariCal Inc., a privately-held aquatic life science biotechnology company, and Blue Ridge Aquaculture, Inc., will invest \$30.33 million to develop a new technology and method of farming Cobia fish in Saltville. The project will create 60 new jobs.

Blue Ridge Aquaculture is the largest indoor Tilapia farm in the United States, and MariCal will supply the technology for this innovative method of fish farming, which uses a combined water treatment and specialty feed process in the commercial rearing of Cobia, a marine fish, in inland areas of the U.S.

“Virginia is the first state in the United States to introduce this high-tech method of fish farming,” said Governor Kaine. “We are pleased that MariCal and Blue Ridge Aquaculture have selected Saltville as the site of this cutting-edge aquaculture technology.”

MariCal, headquartered in Portland, Maine, was founded in 1996, and has operations in Alaska, Canada, Chile, United Kingdom and Norway. The company discovered a class of molecular extracellular ion receptor proteins, called Calcium Receptors (CaR's), that serve as the biological “thermostats,” or “master switches,” enabling fish and other aquatic organisms to sense and respond to changes in both water salinity and nutrient levels. Over the past decade, the company has focused both its product development and licensing efforts in the fields of aquaculture, fisheries, and marine products.

Blue Ridge Aquaculture, Inc., headquartered in Martinsville, has been in operation since 1995. The company raises nearly four million pounds of Tilapia each year at its 80,000-square-foot facility.

“MariCal was attracted to form a joint venture company in Virginia because of the state’s leadership position in business climate, commitment to the growth of U.S. aquaculture and key interactions between private companies and state universities,” said MariCal co-founder and CEO Dr. William Harris. “In addition, we are attracted to Virginia Tech’s leadership in Cobia research and seafood processing technology and we look forward to working with them to further these technology applications in Saltville. By locating Virginia Cobia Farms in Saltville, we intend to combine Saltville’s unique inland location and mineral wealth together with MariCal’s proprietary technology and Blue Ridge Aquaculture’s wealth of commercial experience in re-circulating aquaculture production to grow high-quality marine fish for inland markets throughout the United States.”

“Our technology at Virginia Cobia Farms is going to revolutionize the way the aquaculture industry produces fish,” William Martin, President of Blue Ridge Aquaculture said. “We are solving the seafood industry’s food safety problems with a clean, secure, traceable U.S. protein food supply that has absolutely zero environmental impact. The global aquaculture industry has recognized the potential of Cobia, but until now production has been mainly limited to warm water marine production outside of the United States. With our indoor fish farming technology Virginia Cobia Farms will make Cobia the new ‘Chicken of the Sea’. It is our objective to make Virginia the number one seafood producer in the United States.”

The Virginia Economic Development Partnership worked with the Town of Saltville, Smyth County and Virginia’s aCorridor to secure the project for Virginia. Governor Kaine approved \$100,000 from the Governor’s Opportunity Fund to assist Saltville with the project. The Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission approved \$100,000 in Tobacco Region Opportunity Funds. The company is eligible to receive state benefits from the Virginia Enterprise Zone Program, administered by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. The Virginia Department of Business Assistance will support the project with training assistance through its Workforce Services Jobs Investment Program.

“The Town of Saltville is pleased to welcome Virginia Cobia Farms as its newest corporate citizen,” said Mayor Jeff Campbell. “We believe this company, through its innovative technology and forward thinking management, is positioned for phenomenal growth and will provide quality, sustainable employment for many years to come. Our local government is committed to assisting Virginia Cobia Farms in achieving its potential. Virginia Cobia Farms is the fourth business that has chosen to locate in Saltville, Virginia over the past two years and we credit the town’s partners at the state and local level for this outstanding record of success.”

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