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## **St. Lucie County reels in new aquaculture company**

**Port St. Lucie/August 16, 2019** – St. Lucie County will be home to one of the largest Florida pompano aquaculture facilities in the world once Aquaco Farms begins full operations north of Fort Pierce.

The opening event celebration for Aquaco Farms was held today at the company's 20,000-square-foot facility on Rouse Road. Set on an 8-acre site, Aquaco Farms' \$2.5 million investment will create six new jobs with an average wage of \$47,000 and will ultimately produce approximately one million pounds of fresh Florida pompanos annually.

Joseph Cardenas, the company's founder, raised \$3.2 million for the first phase of the privately funded company and is already planning an expansion. "My passion for fishing and the outdoors, combined with my experience in commercial banking led me to this great opportunity," Cardenas said.

Cardenas and his team have been working to open Aquaco Farms for two years; creating the design, building the infrastructure and constructing the wells. While the prework was time consuming, county development approvals went smoothly. "We had really good luck with the county moving our project forward," said Cardenas. "The county is eager to see this up-and-coming industry succeed here."

Aquaco Farms will be able to sustainably produce one million pounds of fish a year from just 100 fish caught in the wild. The process from egg harvest to fingerling to a marketable 1.25- to 1.5-pound pompano takes nine months, said Cardenas. The company's primary focus will be to wholesale fresh, never-frozen pompano for delivery to the customer within 24- to 36-hours of harvest.

"You don't have to love to eat fish to be excited about Aquaco Farms opening here in St. Lucie County. The initial six jobs created in the first phase pay significantly higher-than-average wages and we look forward to increased employment as the second and third phases of the project come on line," said

Peter Tesch, president of the Economic Council of St. Lucie County. "In addition, having a high-quality source of fresh Florida pompano from Aquaco takes pressure off the wild pompano population."

"We developed this farm the right way," said Cardenas. "There will be no ground injection for waste treatment. We will recirculate 97 percent of the water, keeping our fish healthy by continuously filtering out wastes to ensure clean, clear water." The collected wastes will be sold for fertilizer.

For more information about Aquaco Farms, visit <http://www.aquacofarms.com>

### **About Aquaco Farms**

Aquaco Farms is designed to be one of the largest Florida pompano grow-out facilities in the world and will provide a sustainable highly sought-after commodity in the seafood industry. The Fort Pierce based company will offer a delicious, sustainable, high-quality product that will reduce pressure on wild pompano populations. For more information, visit <http://www.aquacofarms.com>.

### **About the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County**

The EDC is a private, not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting economic vitality in St. Lucie County through the attraction, retention and expansion of businesses in the community. The EDC works in partnership with local governments and the private sector to advance its goals of creating more and better-paying jobs for residents, broadening the tax base and improving St. Lucie County's economic quality of life. Contact the EDC at 772.336.6250 or <http://www.youredc.com>.