Global aquaculture production continues to grow, and farmed seafood is now as important as wild seafood as a food source. Still, aquaculture remains a controversial production technology (Smith et al. 2010). On the one hand, it provides food and livelihoods. On the other hand, it is a new way of using the environment and creates more competition for food and land. Aquaculture production has also contributed to increased trade in seafood (Tveterås et al. 2012). A growing seafood trade is considered positive to the extent that trade creates economic opportunity but negative when it impinges on food sovereignty.

In recent decades, aquaculture has been the world’s fastest growing food production technology, and control of the production process has led to innovation-driven productivity growth (Anderson 2002; Asche 2008). Productivity growth occurs at all stages in the supply chain: in the production process, from input providers, in transportation and logistics, and in processing. Product development—both in primary production (Forsberg and Guttormsen 2006a,b) and in processing (Kvaløy and Tveterås 2008; Asche et al. 2011)—allows producers to reach even more consumers. Salmon has been a leading species in this development, with production growth even faster than aquaculture, in general, and a proliferation of new product forms.

On August 27–28, 2013, the workshop “Seafood Markets and Aquaculture Production with a Focus on Salmon” was held at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences in Ås, Norway. The articles in this special issue are a subset of the 22 total papers presented and illustrate the breadth of topics covered. The majority focus on salmon, while some focus on the general seafood market. Several of the articles specifically illustrate how productivity development and innovation at different levels in the salmon aquaculture supply chain introduce interesting new research topics for seafood researchers; many draw on areas of the economics discipline that were previously regarded as not very relevant for fisheries and seafood.

The most striking feature is the importance of the market and associated downstream market activities. The following exercise illustrates this point. On August 14, 2013, we conducted a Google search for salmon, tuna, and cod recipes. The search returned 50 million hits for salmon, 27 million for tuna, and 13 million for cod. These numbers are suggestive of a feature that is very hard to find data to quantify—product development for end consumers. Our impression