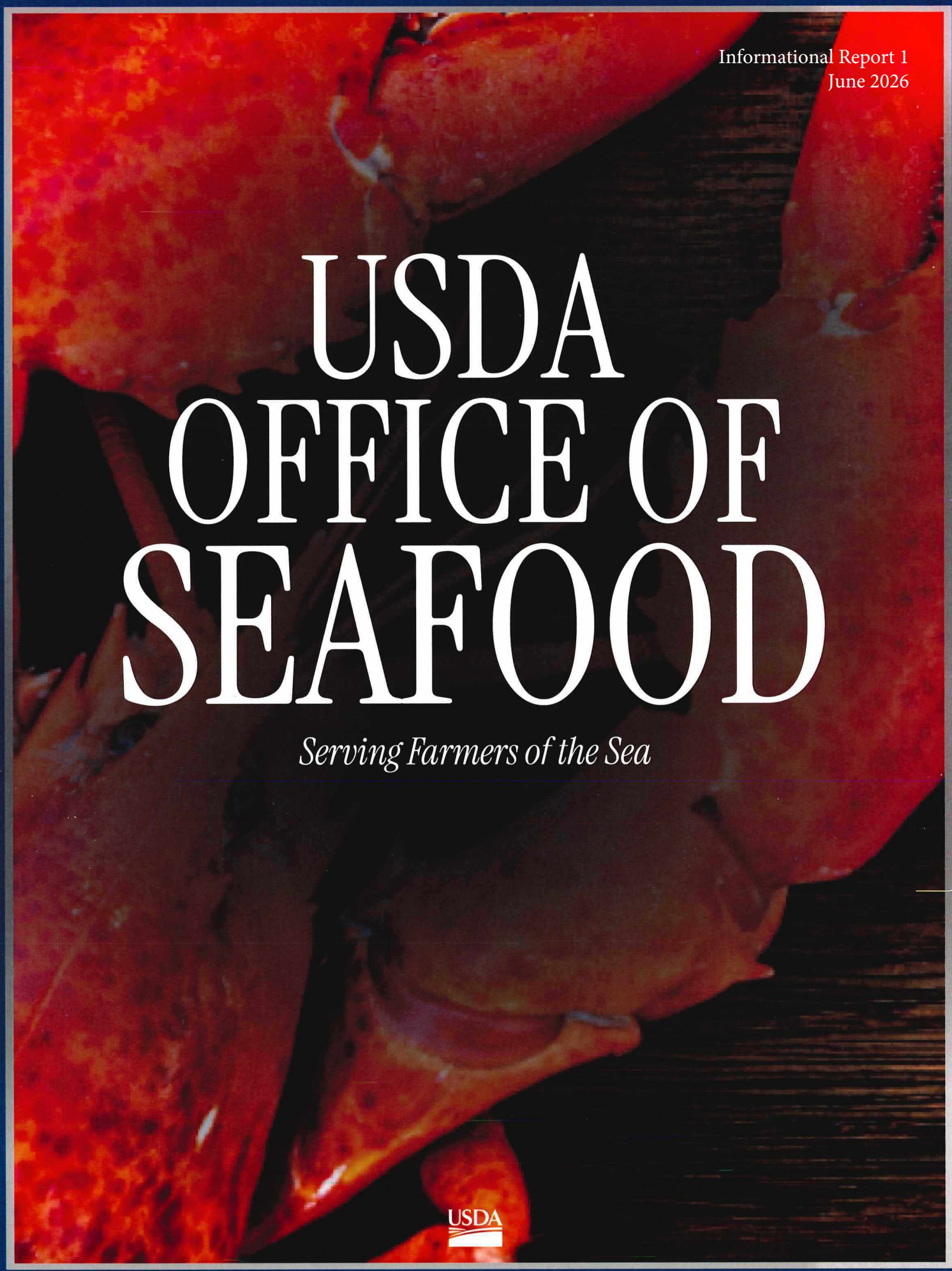


Informational Report 1
June 2026

USDA OFFICE OF SEAFOOD

Serving Farmers of the Sea

USDA

USDA Office of Seafood

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Office of Seafood is responsible for providing leadership, expertise, management, and advice to the Secretary of Agriculture on matters impacting the seafood industry. One of the primary roles of this office will be coordinating across USDA agencies to ensure fishermen are integrated into USDA programs and working alongside the U.S. Department of Commerce and other Federal partners to revitalize the American seafood industry.

Additionally, the USDA Office of Seafood will play an important role in USDA's implementation of President Trump's Executive Order 14276, Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness, including the development of the American First Seafood Strategy to promote production, marketing, sale, and export of U.S. fishery and aquaculture products and strengthen domestic processing capacity.

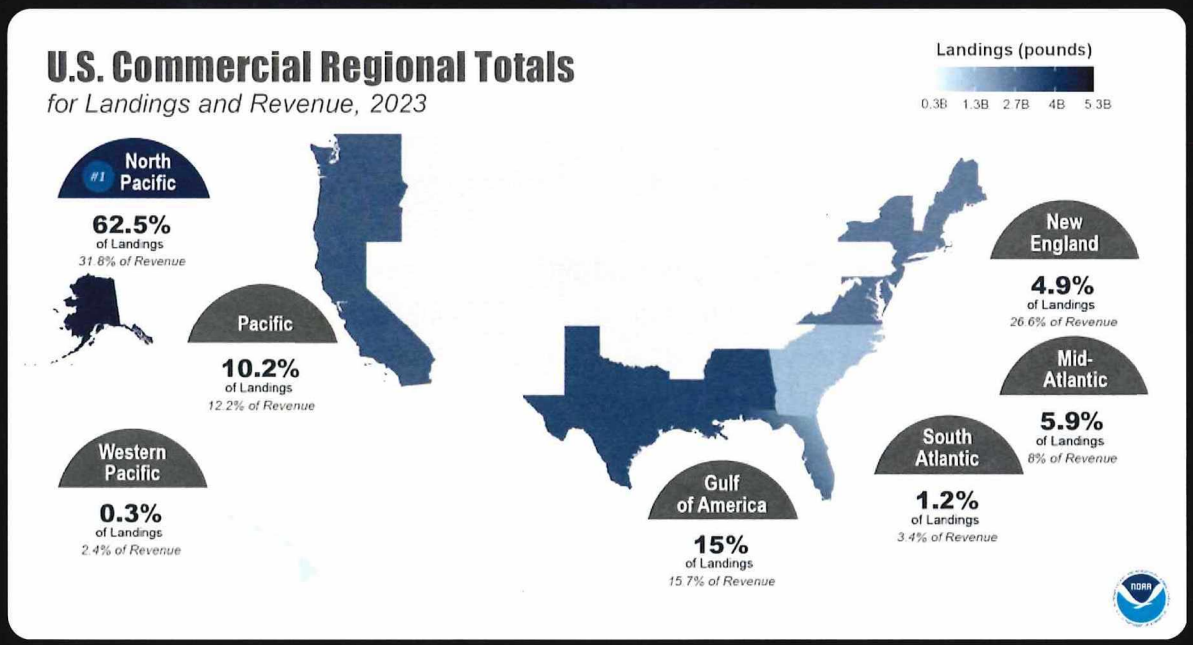
There is a strong consumer demand for seafood in America with the per capita consumption of seafood in 2023 being 19.1 pounds; however, it is estimated that 80 percent of the seafood Americans ate that year came from foreign imports. The United States should be the world's dominant seafood leader, but overregulation and unfair trade practices have put our seafood markets at a competitive disadvantage.

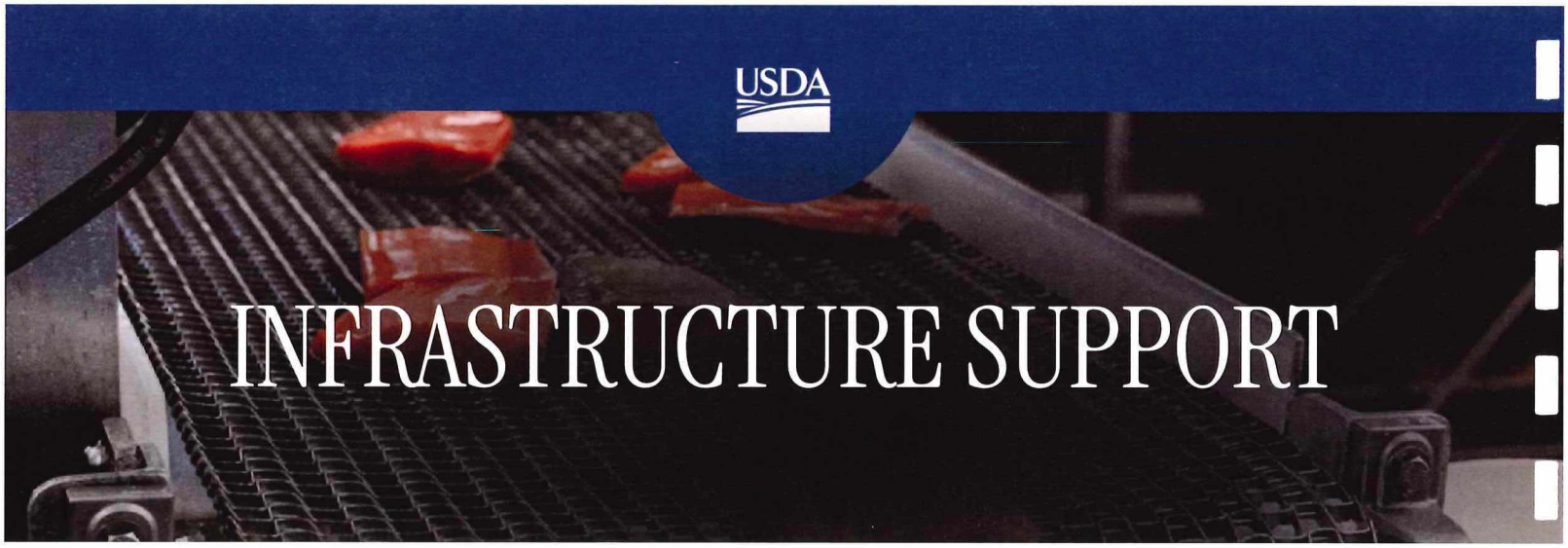
From Maine's lobstering communities to Alaska's salmon fisheries to Louisiana's shrimpers and crawfish farmers, USDA programming should recognize that the U.S. seafood industry is a vital part of the U.S. food supply and should adequately support their operations.

If you are a fisherman or part of the seafood industry looking to utilize USDA programs—whether it be grants and loans to support infrastructure and workforce development, procurement of U.S. seafood products, marketing and promotion of seafood products in both domestic and foreign markets, or risk management and disaster assistance—the USDA Office of Seafood stands ready to help navigate these processes. For more information, please see available resources listed below or reach out to our team at seafood@usda.gov.

USDA and NOAA Collaborations

The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) play an important role in building a resilient seafood sector. They have complementary legislative and statutory authorities that guide marine and fisheries management, conservation, research, grading standards, procurement, production, market development, and more. There are extensive opportunities for further partnership in support of U.S. seafood competitiveness.





INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT

Programs, Grants and Loans

Infrastructure is the backbone of the seafood industry. Fishing operations rely on an interconnected system that extends beyond vessels to include engines, gear, electronics, fuel systems, refrigeration, transportation, and essential shoreside infrastructure. Federal investments in ports, the fleet, and upgraded processing facilities help to protect jobs; advance efficiency, sustainability, and safety; and ensure high-quality products that meet both domestic and international demand.

USDA Rural Development

Rural Business-Cooperative Services
RBCS offers financial assistance, technical support, and resources to help rural businesses expand, become more competitive, and promote community development.

Agriculture Innovation Center Program
This program awards grants to eligible Agriculture Innovation Centers that help ag producers develop and market value-added agricultural products.

Value Added Producer Grant
These grants help agricultural producers generate new products, create or expand marketing opportunities, and increase producer income.

Rural Energy for America Program
This program provides guaranteed loan financing and grant funding to agricultural producers and rural small businesses for renewable energy systems or to make energy efficiency improvements. Among other uses, funds may be used for renewable energy systems, such as ocean (tidal, current, thermal) generation.

Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program

Provides loans and grants to Microenterprise Development Organizations (MDOs) to provide microloans, training, and technical assistance to borrowers and entrepreneurs.

Intermediary Relending Program

This program provides low-interest loans to local lenders – "intermediaries" – who then relend to businesses to help improve economic conditions and create jobs in rural communities.

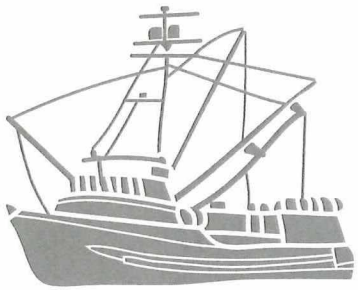
Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant

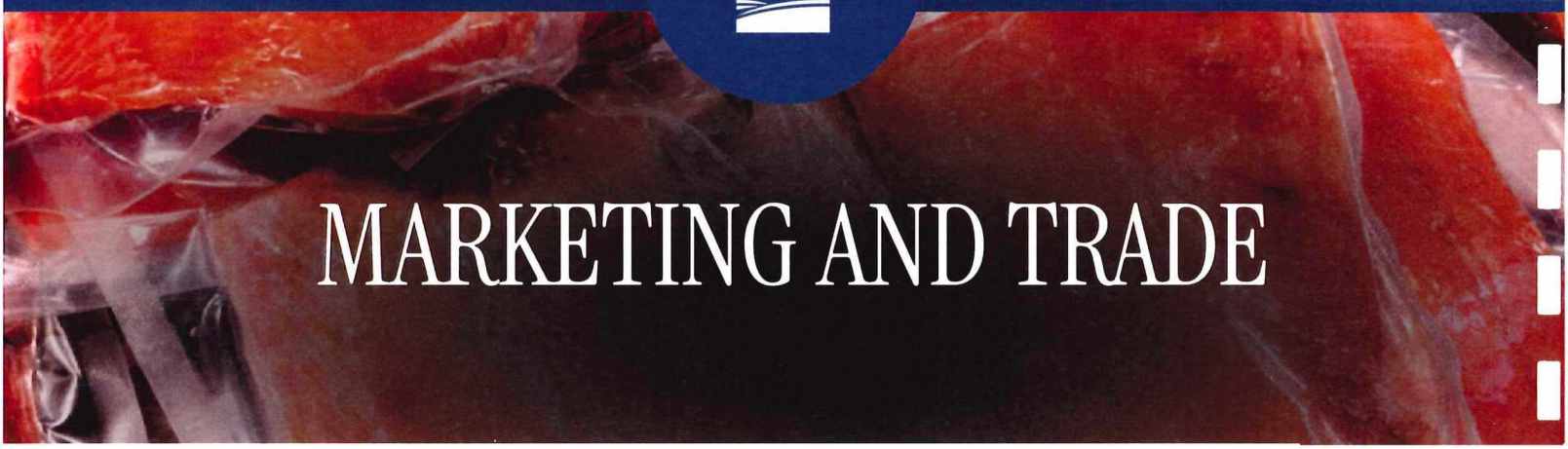
These loans and grants fund eligible projects using local utility organizations as intermediary lenders.

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

Wholesale Markets and Facility Design

The Wholesale Markets and Facility Design team provides technical assistance and support to stakeholders regarding the construction of new structures or the remodeling of existing ones. These facilities include wholesale markets, farmers markets, public markets, incubator kitchens, and food hubs, all of which are important parts of the national food distribution network.





MARKETING AND TRADE

Programs

Agricultural Marketing Service

Federal Purchase Programs (seafood is eligible)

Each year, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Commodity Procurement Program (CPP) purchases approximately $2-5 billion in domestically produced and processed commodity food products, including fish and seafood. These wholesome, high-quality products are delivered nationwide to schools, food banks, and households as well as across the globe through humanitarian food aid programs. AMS purchases from a wide range of vendors, with about half of AMS contracts being awarded to small businesses. Fish and seafood purchased for USDA's nutrition assistance and humanitarian aid programs must meet high standards for quality and wholesomeness and be produced and processed according to detailed USDA specifications.

Export-Related Grant and Cost-Share Programs (seafood is eligible)

The Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program is a competitive grant program that funds projects to explore new market opportunities for U.S. food and agricultural products, including aquaculture products, and to encourage research and innovation aimed at improving the efficiency and performance of the marketing system.
Grants to eligible states and territories to increase the quantity and quality of locally grown food.

Livestock and Poultry Program

The AMS Livestock and Poultry Program empowers American farmers and businesses through services that add value and create demand for livestock, poultry, meat, fish, feedstuffs and related products, while ensuring buyers understand the quality of product they purchase. L&P also conducts economic analyses for fish and seafood products requested by industry organizations for USDA to purchase under the authority of Section 32 of the Act of 1935.

USDA Process Verified Program

The USDA Process Verified Program is a verification service that offers applicants, such as those in the fishing and seafood industry, a unique way to market their products to customers using clearly defined, implemented, and transparent process points. An applicant's program may include one or more agricultural processes or portions of processes where self-described process points are (1) supported by a documented management system, and (2) independently verified by a qualified AMS auditor. Applicants with an approved USDA Process Verified Program may develop promotional materials associated with their process verified points, use the USDA PVP shield in accordance with Program requirements and market themselves as "USDA Process Verified". The USDA Process Verified Program does not relieve the company of meeting regulatory requirements.

Farmers Market Promotion Program

The Farmers Market Promotion Program funds projects that develop, coordinate, and expand direct producer-to-consumer markets (e.g., farmers markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs, agritourism, online sales) to help increase access to and availability of locally and regionally produced agricultural products, including seafood.

Local Food Promotion Program

The Local Food Promotion Program funds projects that develop, coordinate and expand local and regional food business enterprises that engage as intermediaries in indirect producer to consumer marketing, such as food hubs, distributors, and other local food aggregators, to help increase access to and availability of locally and regionally produced agricultural products, including seafood.

Regional Food Systems Partnership

The Regional Food System Partnerships program supports partnerships that connect public and private resources to plan and develop local or regional food systems, which can include aquaculture or wild-caught seafood. The program focuses on strengthening the viability and resilience of regional food economies through collaboration and coordination.

Micro-Grants for Food Security Program

The Micro-Grants for Food Security Program assists agricultural agencies or departments in eligible states and territories to increase the quantity and quality of locally grown food in food insecure communities through small-scale gardening, herding, and livestock operations (which can include seafood) in food insecure communities in areas of the United States that have significant levels of food insecurity and import a significant quantity of foods. The agricultural agencies or departments competitively distribute the funds through subawards to eligible entities.

Farm Service Agency Farm Loan Programs

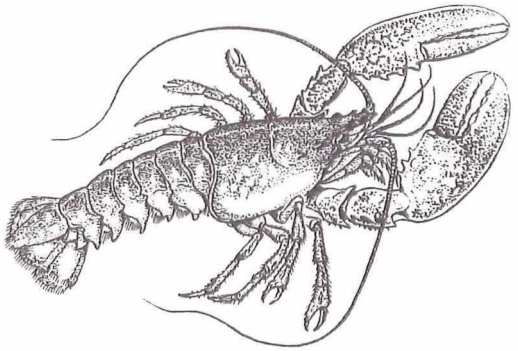
Seafood operations engaged in aquaculture activities may be eligible to participate in FSA Farm Loan Programs. These loans are designed to help producers get the financing they need to start, expand, or maintain a family farm operation. To be eligible, an operation must produce an agricultural commodity for sale which means that while aquaculture operations are eligible for FSA farm loans, wild-capture operations are generally not eligible.

FSA's most common loan types include the following:

- Operating Loans are used for the purchase of essential items such as livestock, feed, seed, supplies, and equipment. They can also cover annual farm operating costs and living expenses.
- Farm Ownership Loans are used to purchase real estate for the operation, to construct or improve buildings or facilities essential to the operation, or to promote water conservation activities.
- Emergency Loans help operations recover from production and physical losses due to drought, flooding, or other natural disasters.

Many FSA loans are available as either Direct Loans, which are made directly to the operator by FSA, or as Guaranteed Loans which are made by a USDA-approved lender and backed by FSA. FSA also has a portion of funds set aside each year for operations that are just starting out, called Beginning Farmers and Ranchers. These operations may also benefit from FSA's Microloan Program which consists of operating and ownership loans designed for smaller or specialty operations with eased application requirements and less paperwork.

More details about FSA Farm Loans can be found online at https://www.fsa.usda.gov/resources/farm-loan-programs. If you want to explore which type of FSA loan best meets the needs of your operation, the Loan Assistance Tool is also available online at https://lat.fpac.usda.gov.



Foreign Agricultural Service

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service Market Access Program

This program supports a range of consumer-focused promotion for small businesses and cooperatives and is widely used by organizations representing fruits, nuts, processed foods and intermediate bulk commodities.

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service Foreign Market Development Program

This program supports long-term market development with a focus on generic commodity promotion, rather than individual brand promotion. Preference is given to organizations that represent broad industry sectors with nationwide membership with an aim to deliver the greatest economic benefit for American agriculture.





WORKFORCE AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Programs, Grants and Loans

Federal investments in the seafood industry workforce and businesses fuel economic growth, strengthen coastal communities, and ensure the long-term sustainability of a vital national resource. By supporting training programs and modernizing business operations, these investments empower workers and help small businesses compete in an evolving global market and reduce reliance on imports.

USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

AFRI Education and Workforce Development
This program focuses on developing the next generation of research, education, and extension professionals in the food and agricultural sciences.

Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program
Provides grants to organizations for training, education, outreach, and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers and ranchers.

Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program
Helps qualified veterinarians offset a significant portion of the debt incurred from receiving their veterinary medicine degrees in return for their service in certain high-priority veterinary shortage situations.

Veterinary Services Grant Program
Supports education and extension activities and practice enhancement initiatives to help develop, implement, and sustain veterinary services and relieve veterinarian shortage situations in the U.S., which includes insular areas.

USDA Rural Development (RD)

Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program

Provides loans and grants to Microenterprise Development Organizations (MDOs) to provide microloans, training, and technical assistance to borrowers and entrepreneurs.

Rural Business-Cooperative Services

RBCS offers financial assistance, technical support, and resources to help rural businesses expand, become more competitive, and promote community development.

Agriculture Innovation Center Program

This program makes grants to agriculture innovation centers to help agricultural producers develop and market value-added agricultural products.

Value Added Producer Grant

This program helps U.S. agricultural producers enter into value-added activities by supporting planning activities and working capital needs.

Rural Energy for America Program

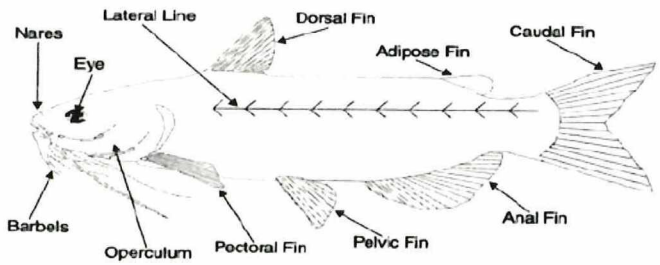
The program provides guaranteed loan financing and grant funding to agricultural producers and rural small businesses for renewable energy systems or to make energy efficiency improvements.

Intermediary Relending Program

This program provides low-interest loans to local lenders – "intermediaries" – who then relend to businesses to help improve economic conditions and create jobs in rural communities.

Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant

These loans and grants fund eligible projects using local utility organizations as intermediary lenders.



USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)

Farm Loan Programs Overview

The Farm Service Agency offers loans to help farmers and ranchers get the financing they need to start, expand or maintain a family farm.

Loan Assistance Tool

This online tool helps producers better navigate the farm loan application process

Farm Operating Loans

Farm Operating Loans may be used for normal operating expenses, machinery and equipment, minor real estate repairs or improvements, and refinancing debt.

Farm Ownership Loans

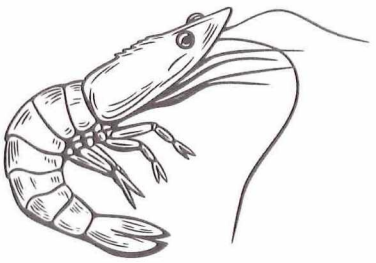
Farm Ownership Loans may be used to purchase a farm, enlarge an existing farm, construct new farm buildings and/or improve structures, pay closing costs, and promote soil and water conservation and protection.

Farm Storage Facility Loan Program

Provides low-interest financing so producers can build or upgrade permanent and portable storage facilities and equipment.

Microloan Programs

Microloan Programs focus on the financing needs of small, beginning farmer, niche and non-traditional farm operations, such as truck farms, farms participating in direct marketing and sales such as farmers' markets, CSA's (Community Supported Agriculture), restaurants and grocery stores, or those using hydroponic, aquaponic, organic and vertical growing methods.





RISK MANAGEMENT AND DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Programs

Through robust risk management programs and disaster assistance, fisherman and seafood producers can better prepare for storms, market fluctuations, and environmental challenges. USDA investments help safeguard livelihoods, stabilize supply chains, and protect the long-term sustainability of our fisheries.

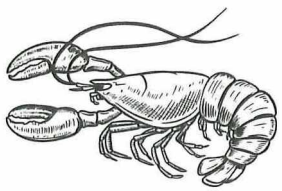
USDA Risk Management Agency Insurance

Shellfish Pilot Crop Insurance Program
The Shellfish pilot crop insurance program is an actual production history-price component plan of insurance for container-grown oysters commercially cultivated for the fresh, half-shell market.

Group Risk Plan Oysters
This is a federal crop insurance program for wild-caught oysters, available in Louisiana, that insures against widespread loss of oyster production in a county.

Aquaculture Dollar Plan Clams
Dollar plan policies provide protection against damage due to naturally occurring perils.

Whole-Farm Revenue Protection
Whole-Farm Revenue Protection provides a risk management safety net for all commodities on the farm under one insurance policy and is available in all counties nationwide.



USDA Farm Service Agency Programs

Noninsured Disaster Assistance Program

This program offers financial support to producers of non-insurable crops to protect against natural disasters that result in lower yields, destroyed crops, or the inability to plant.

Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program

This program offers financial aid to producers who suffer losses from specific adverse conditions not covered by other USDA disaster assistance programs.

Farm Loan Programs Overview

Learn more about how the Farm Service Agency offers loans to help farmers and ranchers get the financing they need to start, expand or maintain a family farm.

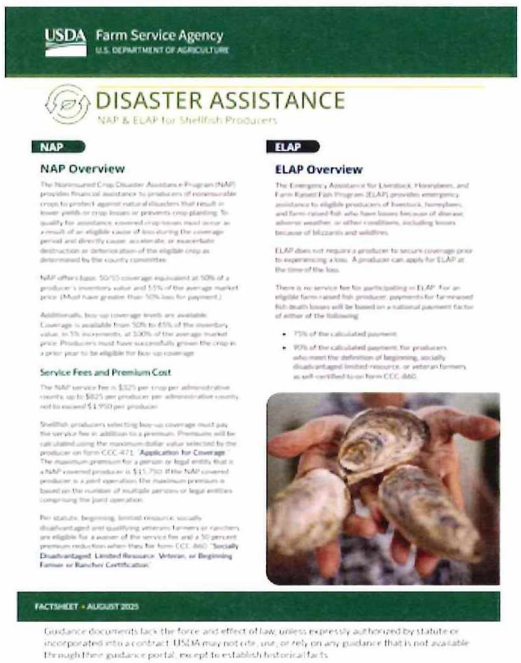
Loan Assistance Tool

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Fact Sheets

- Risk Management Agency and Farm Service Agency Aquaculture Programs
- Noninsured Disaster Assistance Program and Emergency Assistance for Livestock for Shellfish Producers
- Emergency Assistance for Livestock - Verifiable and Reliable Documentation







NUTRITION

Programs and Guidelines

Seafood is key to Making America Healthy Again and a contributor to national food security. Seafood is a nutrient-dense food that supports a balanced diet throughout the lifespan. Learn how USDA is promoting seafood for consumer health as well as supporting opportunities to offer seafood for school meals and other USDA nutrition programs.

Agricultural Marketing Service

Micro-Grants for Food Security Program

This program assists agricultural agencies or departments in eligible states and territories to increase the quantity and quality of locally grown food in food insecure communities through small-scale gardening, herding, and livestock operations in food insecure communities in areas of the United States that have significant levels of food insecurity and import a significant quantity of foods.

Food and Nutrition Service

The Patrick Leahy Farm to School Program

This program helps child nutrition program operators incorporate local foods in the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, the Summer Food Service Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program and all associated programs. The Farm to School Program has been successfully used to incorporate seafood – sea to school – in school meals. For example, the Gulf of Maine Research Institute received a 2020 Farm to School grant to work with K-12 schools across New England to increase the amount of local seafood served in public school cafeterias.

Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2025-2030

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans is the cornerstone for federal nutrition programs and provides food-based recommendations to promote health, help prevent diet-related chronic diseases, and meet nutrient needs.



SEAFOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION

Resources

Federal investment in seafood industry safety strengthens both consumer confidence and economic vitality. These investments fund important research, technologies, and training to help prevent contamination, reduce workplace hazards, and ensure the highest quality seafood reaches the market.

USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service

Catfish from Farm to Table

Catfish is the largest aquaculture industry in the United States. According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service, catfish growers in the United States had sales of $437 million in 2023. Through the 2008 and 2014 Farm Bills, Congress gave the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) authority to inspect Siluriformes fish, such as catfish. Read on for information about this white meat, low-fat fish, which is the sixth most popular seafood species in the U.S.

Siluriformes Fish Import Labeling

This guidance provides information about regulatory requirements for the labeling of imported Siluriformes fish products.

Compliance Guideline for Establishments that Slaughter or Further Process Siluriformes Fish and Fish

This guidance document is designed to help official establishments that slaughter or further process Siluriformes fish and fish products meet FSIS regulatory requirements.



RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

PROGRAMS

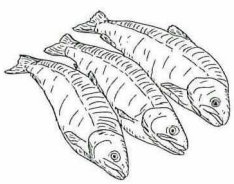
Federal investments in aquaculture research and development play a critical role in the seafood industry by advancing sustainability, innovation, and market opportunities.

USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

Small Business Innovation Research and Technology Transfer Programs
These competitively awarded grants support high quality research on important scientific problems and opportunities in agriculture that could lead to significant public benefits.

Aquaculture Programs (Regional Aquaculture Centers and Special Research Grants for Aquaculture)
USDA administers five Regional Aquaculture Centers that support research, development, and education to enhance U.S. aquaculture production. Special Research Grants for Aquaculture support the development of a sustainable aquaculture industry and science-based innovations to address industry constraints.

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative
This funding portfolio includes both single- and multi-function research, education, and extension grants that address key problems of national, regional, and multi-state importance. AFRI-funded projects sustain all components of agriculture, including aquaculture. Each grant program has its own unique set of requirements, the details of which are available within specific requests for applications.



USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS)

ARS National Program for Aquaculture

This program seeks to conduct research and deliver technologies that improve domestic aquaculture production efficiency and product quality while minimizing impacts on natural resources.

USDA Rural Development (RD)

Rural Business-Cooperative Services

This USDA RD agency offers financial assistance, technical support, and resources to help rural businesses expand, become more competitive, and promote community development. It aims to strengthen rural America's economic foundation by increasing access to capital, improving infrastructure, and encouraging entrepreneurship.

Agriculture Innovation Center Program

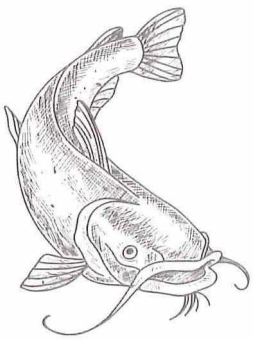
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