

Alabama Catfish/Aquaculture Strategic Plan

I. Identify measurable goals for catfish/aquaculture that will contribute to Alabama's economy and employment.

Ultimate goal to produce one billion pounds per year of catfish in Alabama and expand production of tilapia, rainbow trout, and other species to meet our new demand.

- Increase the amount of research being done to combat diseases facing catfish and other species of fish. Of primary concern at the current time is *Aeromonas hydrophila* in the areas of disease transmission, vaccine development, and probiotics investigation.
- Develop export markets for our aquaculture products and expand ways to level the playing field for Alabama raised/processed products versus imported seafood.
- Continue to develop Alabama's coastal oyster aquaculture expansion while developing a diverse marine aquaculture program in our coastal zone.
- Support development of indoor recirculating aquaculture systems to produce tilapia, rainbow trout, marine shrimp, and other high-value seafood species.
- Develop profitable value-added products to reach more consumers who demand convenience and quality.
- Continue the study and implementation of new production systems, called in-pond raceways, to make these systems profitable and more efficient for multiple aquatic species.

These actions would help reduce an embarrassing statistic for the United States. We currently import 91 percent of the seafood we eat.

II. Develop and implement a strategy to remove barriers to your success and to foster success.

- Play to Alabama's strengths that include a suitable climate, available water (both fresh and marine), relatively inexpensive energy, and the expertise at Auburn University.
- Adopt lean manufacturing practices in all sectors of our industry to continue to find ways to reduce costs and improve product quality.

- Offer a curriculum in our two-year institutions that will ultimately provide trained individuals to support technology adoption.

III. Identify public policy or regulatory changes needed to achieve goals.

- Amend the current state law regarding Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) to ensure that consumers know what species of seafood they are purchasing and its country of origin.
- Facilitate the development of export markets for all seafood products.
- Reduce the regulatory process for siting coastal marine aquaculture farms.
- Implement a fair and expedited marine aquaculture permitting process.
- Provide tax incentives for adopting new technologies that can enhance production in aquaculture.
- Do not allow future economic development to be hindered by barriers to the sustainable use of Alabama's water resources.

IV. Identify the research and Extension issues you need addressed to achieve your goals.

- There is a need for a "CDC" for aquatic animal surveillance and health. It is in the AU approval process now and is called "Center for Aquatic Surveillance and Health." This center should focus on studying disease transmission as well as on prevention and cures for fish diseases such as *Aeromonas hydrophila* and others.
- More research is needed in aquatic animal nutrition. Catfish farmers need a better understanding of how feeding affects fish growth and the economic impacts of different feeds. An extruder feed mill on the AU campus that will produce large to small quantities of research diets to support our aquatic animal nutrition work is desperately needed.
- Faculty positions at the Auburn School of Fisheries, Aquaculture, and Aquatic Sciences need to be protected to ensure that the school be able to continue to research problems affecting catfish and aquaculture industries. A faculty member dedicated to market research and education would be very beneficial for the industry, and AU facilities within the School of Fisheries, Aquaculture, and Aquatic Sciences need to be upgraded

to keep up with our discoveries and to develop technologies of the future.

V. Identify the communications needed to achieve your goals.

- The Alabama Farmers Federation is an active supporter of our aquaculture commodity. To do a better job of communicating, we need active websites and training in social media.
- We have a need for the state to help us with international trade.
- A curriculum in aquaculture at our two-year colleges is needed to help train the expert labor and management of the future, if we are to grow.
- High schools have adopted significant aquaculture curriculum, but more is needed in order to have a labor force that can help our relatively new industry grow and be profitable.