



UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

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2024 UFA National Policy Platform

United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) represents 37 commercial fishing organizations participating in fisheries throughout the state and the federal fisheries off Alaska's coast. UFA's mission is to promote and protect the common interest of Alaska's commercial fishing industry as a vital component of Alaska's social and economic well-being. Alaska seafood represents more than 60% of all seafood harvested in the U.S. and is a critical part of domestic food production, as well as export markets in about 100 countries worldwide. Alaska seafood is subject to global market factors that directly affect its value, whether it is sold in the U.S. or exported.

Alaska seafood currently faces exceptional national and global challenges including (1) trade policy and non-reciprocal tariffs that favor other nations, (2) high levels of supply and current inventory, (3) high operational costs and inflation, (4) reduced consumer demand, (5) and global competitors that are subject to less regulations with lower operating costs, but are also less sustainable than domestic seafood harvesters and processors. These challenges affect the economic viability of harvesting and processing businesses, and our local communities that are dependent on seafood commerce and fish landing taxes across the state of Alaska.

United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) supports efforts to improve global competitiveness and resilience of the Alaska commercial seafood industry (including harvesters, processors, support businesses, communities and the state of Alaska). Achieving global competitiveness and resilience for U.S. seafood requires a multi-pronged approach across multiple government offices. For example, NOAA is currently creating an implementation plan for the National Seafood Strategy which necessitates collaboration across multiple national agencies that affect the viability of Alaska seafood. The Federal government's Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee issued the 2023 National Export Strategy that includes a chapter on Seafood Industries and highlights forthcoming efforts to improve interagency coordination and global market competitiveness for domestic seafood producers. To further coordinate and move that effort forward we strongly advocate for the creation of an ***Office of Seafood Policy and Program Integration*** within USDA. In addition, we identify the following as UFA's National Policy statements.

1. Alaska seafood is a valuable component of national food security, health, and commerce.

Wild seafood from Alaska is responsibly harvested, and one of the best sources of essential nutrients. In Alaska we are incredibly proud of our sustainably managed commercial fisheries, and believe our sustainability distinguishes us from many foreign competitors. This message should continue to be pushed out to the American public to encourage more domestic consumption of U.S. seafood.

Seafood is nutritious, but Americans don't eat enough of it. UFA supports integrating seafood into national strategies for improving public health and nutrition. Updated guidance from the FDA recommends increased fish consumption for a healthy diet, especially for pregnant women and children. Current Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend two to three servings of healthy seafood a week per person, yet domestic consumption rates remain less than half that level. The Government Accountability Office issued a 2022 report finding that nutritional guidelines recommend school-aged children receive between four and ten ounces of seafood per week, but the National School Lunch Program only delivers about three ounces of seafood per year to these students.

2. Integrate seafood into USDA policy strategies/programs and increase USDA Section 32 purchases of Alaska seafood.

UFA advocates for integrating seafood into U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) policies and programs to help ensure domestic food security, supply chain integrity, and provide support for harvesting and processing businesses - similar to that already available to other domestic protein sources. The lack of recognition for domestic seafood in U.S. trade policy objectives and priorities results in market conditions that reduce the value of Alaska seafood and accessibility to global markets. This creates an unlevel playing field that harms domestically harvested Alaska seafood.

As a way to help level the playing field UFA appreciates and encourages increasing government purchases of Alaska seafood, e.g., Section 32 purchases. UFA also suggests increased re-investment in US seafood via USDA low-interest loans and loan guarantees for fishermen and processors, and expansion of USDA Foreign Agricultural Service trade missions and other export market development assistance to include seafood.

3. Ensure U.S. seafood trade policies and strategies best support the seafood industry.

UFA seeks improved trade policy work through the United States Trade Representative (USTR) in order to create a more level playing field for Alaska seafood. We see the positive pattern in day-to-day trade policy formulation and implementation where USTR works hand-in-glove with USDA on agricultural trade. However, there is no comparable process on seafood within the Department of Commerce. We encourage expanding USTR's focus on seafood, including adding additional seafood expertise, in order to develop effective policy positions to help Alaska seafood trade. Our members also strongly support resolving the unbalanced and unfair seafood trade relationship that allows Russian-harvested seafood to continue to enter the U.S. duty free due to its "substantial transformation" in third-party countries, usually China.

4. Increase investment to improve and update domestic infrastructure for U.S. seafood.

Alaska is a commercial fishing powerhouse, but even it has aging fishing fleets and processing facilities. Our seafood industry would greatly benefit from investments to modernize our seafood infrastructure. Modernizing and replacing commercial fishing vessels would increase efficiency and safety on the water, while modernizing processing facilities would increase efficiency while creating opportunities for more value-add processing in the U.S. Concerted effort to bring more seafood processing back to the U.S., rather than continuing to ship product overseas, will create a tremendous opportunity for U.S. seafood. Updating seafood industry infrastructure will benefit our coastal fishing communities, and increase local and national food security by eliminating the need to ship product overseas. UFA also supports government policies that reduce our domestic operating costs, including policies on recapitalization, vessel construction, tax structures, workforce accessibility, and energy.

5. Fully funded fisheries science/management and industry promotion & marketing grants.

Core fishery surveys provide necessary information that underpins our entire science-based management system. Existing core surveys must continue, and NOAA should consider expanding what is considered core to account for rapidly changing ocean conditions and shifting fish stocks (for example, adding regular surveys in the Northern Bering Sea or increasing surveys in the Gulf of Alaska to occur annually). In addition, UFA advocates for increased funding to the Saltonstall-Kennedy (SK) Fund, which currently derives funding from 30% of duties collected on imported marine products. The SK act provides that 60% [of the 30%] go to the SK grant program to promote and develop US-produced seafood, however, less than 5% is currently used to fund the SK grant program. UFA supports increasing federal funding for new product development, testing, promotion, and marketing of US produced seafood through Saltonstall Kennedy Funds, provided federal funding for fisheries science and management is not compromised.