



PSPA Position to Improve Global Competitiveness and Resilience of the Alaska Seafood Industry October 2023

Alaska seafood currently faces exceptional national and international challenges including trade policy and non-reciprocal tariffs that favor other nations, high global supply and existing unsold inventory for salmon and whitefish throughout the entire supply chain, high relative costs due to inflation and other factors, reduced consumer demand post-pandemic, and foreign seafood competitors that are less regulated, less sustainable, and have lower operating costs than domestic seafood producers. These global market factors directly affect the value of Alaska seafood, whether it is sold in the U.S. or exported. The recent confluence of events has lowered the value of commercial seafood across the nation, including for Alaska, and resulted in market collapse. While some challenging market conditions will improve over time, the need for federal governmental agency leadership and collaboration (Department of Commerce/NOAA, USDA, USTR, FDA) to recognize, elevate, and support the domestic seafood industry is necessary to improve our overall competitiveness and resilience, as is the need to fully maintain core data collection efforts that form the foundation of the management structure.

The Alaska seafood industry is made up of thousands of small and independent fishermen businesses, processing businesses, support businesses including transportation, brokers, buyers, and marketing for consumer/retail markets, and rural coastal communities (many of which are not accessible by road). Their well-being, as well as Alaska's economy, depends on the competitiveness and resilience of the entire Alaska seafood supply chain. Alaska produces approximately 5 billion pounds of sustainable seafood every year – more than 60% of U.S. harvested seafood – and is dependent on access to both U.S. markets and export markets to be viable. Improving the global competitiveness of Alaska's seafood benefits the entire seafood industry: harvesters, processors, support businesses, communities, and the state of Alaska.

Seafood is not currently integrated into many USDA policies or programs designed to ensure domestic food security, supply chain integrity, and support for harvesting and processing businesses, at the same level as terrestrial sources of protein. At the same time, the USDA's Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the Food and Drug Administration's Seafood Consumption Advice recommend increased fish consumption for a healthy diet, especially for pregnant women and children, yet domestic consumption remains less than half of the recommended levels for adults and significantly below the nutritional guidelines recommended for school-aged children via the National School Lunch Program. At the international level, the lack of domestic seafood recognition in U.S. trade policy objectives and priorities results in non-reciprocal trade relationships and market conditions that reduce the value of Alaska seafood relative to seafood-producing competitors in other countries with lower tariffs. While Alaska has absorbed significant costs in adhering to sustainable fisheries management requirements and building responsible supply chain management practices, Alaska seafood has incurred significant losses in export markets, undermining years of investment and making it increasingly difficult to rebuild a competitive position in global seafood markets.

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PSPA and its member processors support efforts of the federal government to:

1. Improve and expand existing agency functions that support US seafood, including:

- Strengthen government planning for and execution of fisheries science and management, especially as needed to improve our understanding of and response to climate impacts on living marine resources
- Improve coordination and collaboration across multiple federal governmental agencies that affect the economic viability of Alaska seafood via the implementation plan for NOAA's National Seafood Strategy and Chapter 9 of the Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee's 2023 National Export Strategy
- Expand use of USDA Foreign Agricultural Service trade missions and other export market development assistance to include seafood
- Improve the efficacy (e.g., timing, scope) of and maintain or increase the use of government purchasing programs for Alaska produced seafood
- Improve the utility and applicability of governmental policies on recapitalization, vessel construction, tax structures, workforce accessibility, energy, and infrastructure
- Increase government funding for new product development, testing, promotion, and marketing of US produced seafood

2. Integrate US seafood production into national food policy strategies and USDA programs designed to support domestic food production, including:

- Create an Office of Seafood Policy and Program Integration within USDA to fully integrate US seafood into USDA policy strategies and programs designed to ensure domestic food security, supply chain integrity, and support for harvesting and processing businesses, similar to other terrestrial sources of protein; coordinate USDA seafood support programs with seafood-related programs of other agencies; and provide a point of entry for seafood producers to more effectively engage with USDA
- Increase re-investment in US seafood producers and related support businesses via expanding eligibility of USDA low-interest loans or loan guarantees to fishermen and processors
- Fully integrate seafood and seafood nutritional guidance into national strategies for improving public health and nutrition

3. Restore fairness and reciprocity for international trade in U.S. seafood products, including:

- Embed and improve seafood expertise and leadership in the office of the U.S. Trade Representative to coordinate seafood trade objectives among USTR offices, coordinate USTR seafood trade programs with seafood efforts of other agencies, and provide a point of entry for seafood producers to more effectively engage with USTR
- Improve trade policy via USTR and other agencies to create a more reciprocal tariff structure for seafood exports and imports, reduce burden and risk associated with non-tariff barriers, and develop more effective tools for monitoring supply chain traceability and deterring Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing
- Resolve the unbalanced and unfair seafood trade relationship between Russia and the United States