

HIGHLIGHTS

- Private commercial aquaculture is practiced in every U.S. State and territory, from Atlantic salmon off the coast of Maine to alligators in Louisiana to giant clams on the Pacific islands of Micronesia. Although as many as 30 are commonly cited aquacultural species, fewer than 10 species make up most of U.S. aquacultured food production: catfish, trout, crawfish, salmon, hybrid striped bass, tilapia, and various molluscs.
- Aquaculture products as a proportion of total seafood consumption is gradually rising, likely reflecting increasing availability and favorable prices compared to wild caught seafood. This may portend growing consumer recognition of the nutritional value of seafood in general and confidence in the quality of aquacultured products in particular. Hopes for aquaculture as a growth industry, especially for economically troubled rural and coastal communities, remains high.
- Federal involvement in aquaculture is based primarily in three organizations: the Department of Agriculture, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Department of Commerce), and Fish and Wildlife Service (Department of Interior). Despite a long history of debate over Federal agency roles in aquaculture, and establishment of a coordinating body, specific agency roles and responsibilities remain unclear.
- Aquaculture received roughly \$60 million in financial assistance from the Federal government in 1994. The U.S. Department of Agriculture was responsible for almost half, the Department of Commerce for nearly one-quarter, and the Department of Interior for just over one-tenth (the remaining funds were allocated among 24 other agencies). Each Department has research centers devoted in whole or in part to aquaculture development.
- Most Federal funding for aquaculture is directed to research, with substantially smaller amounts devoted to regulatory efforts and assistance programs. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, whose aquaculture funding rose 135 percent between 1988 and 1994, is the agency most active in commercial aquaculture research. Funding for the other Department rose substantially in the same period: nearly 100 percent for the Department of Commerce and 235 percent for the Department of Interior. The current research base is very diverse in terms of funding mechanisms, areas of science, and cultured species.
- Twenty Federal agency programs also may have potential for providing support to the aquaculture industry, mostly in the form of financial assistance; however these programs have not been used by or directed to the aquaculture industry.