

EAST COAST SHELLFISH GROWERS ASSOCIATION



The East Coast Shellfish Growers Association represents over 1,500 shellfish farmers from Maine to Florida. These proud stewards of the marine environment produce sustainable, farmed shellfish while providing thousands of jobs in rural coastal towns.

The ECSGA informs policy makers and regulators to protect a way of life.

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The Mouth of the Bay Embrace the Suck



Executive Director
Bob Rheault

It is hard to believe that summer is two-thirds gone by. In the accelerated world of the pandemic, we seem to be careening from crisis to crisis. Just a little over four months ago everything was looking rosy, and then everything changed, seemingly overnight.

The economy nearly collapsed, leaving millions unemployed. Almost half of our restaurant customers are still closed, and their survival is in question. We are 100 days out from an election and our evening news is consumed with images of civil unrest.

While many members report that sales are recovering, few are where they would like to be in terms of volume, and the patchy nature of the recovery is hard to explain. Only the most optimistic among us are predicting a full recovery for shellfish markets this year. As I write this our senators are arguing about what to put into the fifth COVID relief bill. We have supported the bipartisan RESTAURANTS Act which would provide \$120 billion in grants to beleaguered

independent restaurants. I continue to hold out hope that the new relief bill will direct the USDA to purchase a billion dollars of seafood for food banks.

States have begun rolling out the Fisheries Disaster funds that were allocated as part of the CARES Act, but the \$300 million allocated will fall far short of covering the revenue losses of fisheries, aquaculture and seafood processors. Our efforts to have shellfish farms covered under the USDA Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) appear to have been thwarted, despite the many senators and representatives who wrote letters on our behalf.

I was deeply disappointed to learn that our petition to have the USDA purchase surplus oysters for food banks was denied. We continue to work with The Nature Conservancy, the Pew Charitable Trusts, Sea Grant and various states to further plans to plant big uglies on oyster reefs, and it looks as if that effort will go forward in several states.

I don't think we can really count on the government to bail us out. We are in for a rough autumn, and like those days when it's blowing a gale and 20 degrees out there, we just gotta get 'er done and embrace the suck.

Thankfully, shellfish farmers are a resilient and optimistic bunch.

Hang in there.

Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program: How to Make NAP Work for You!

by Paul Russell
Risk Management Specialist,
University of Rhode Island

Editor's Note: While many growers love to complain about NAP insurance, I recently heard about a New England grower who received a six-figure settlement for a claim submitted last summer. That was an eye-opener for me, and after a little digging I learned that several large claims have been settled in the shellfish farming community in recent years. While NAP only pays out about 27 percent of the value of a loss, it costs next to nothing to purchase. If you get wiped out it can be substantially better than no insurance at all, and until we have better options, it is the only game in town. The success or failure of your claim depends on several factors: the quality of your record keeping, the knowledge of your claims adjuster, and the calculation of the background mortality rate for growers in your

county. All of these will weigh heavily on the probability of a successful claim. Losses must be weather-related, and claims should be brought promptly. Your ability to document your crop inventory prior to the weather event is critical—so take a lot of notes and keep good records to make that task as easy as possible. If your county's background mortality rate is set too high, or if average prices are set too low, it will be difficult to get any payout at all, so petition your county Farm Service Agency office to establish realistic numbers. These values should be specific to both grow-out method and region. Bigger payouts are possible with expanded coverage, but I would caution that these options rarely seem to make sense financially. Buying expanded coverage for a portion of your crop is ill advised.
—Bob Rheault

NAP is the disaster program for crops not covered by the larger commodity crop-insurance



ADAM TYLER

Basic NAP coverage is inexpensive (or free) and pays out around 27 percent of the value of a weather-related shellfish mortality. Good record-keeping before disaster strikes will help you make a successful claim. The 2021 application deadline is Sept. 1.

policies, and for many growers it is the only option that offers some level of protection from natural disasters. In order to make a claim, you have to suffer a loss of at least 50 percent of your crop. The basic catastrophic coverage payout is calculated by multiplying 50 percent of your pre-storm inventory by 55 percent of the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) posted price. While this isn't great coverage, it is affordable. A basic catastrophic policy costs only \$325,

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Member Profile: Fishers Island Oyster Farm

by Robert Rheault,
ECSCGA Executive Director

Recently I had a chance to virtually visit with old friends Sarah and Steve Malinowski, who founded Fishers Island Oyster Farm on the eastern end of Long Island Sound. I first met them about 35 years ago when I landed my first oyster-farming job—a summer gig working as a farm manager for Carey Matthiessen.

Sarah and Steve were among many in the shellfish farming community who were trained and mentored by Matthiessen, a legend who showed by example that you actually could raise five children while being an oyster farmer. Carey trained and nurtured many pioneers in the oyster world, including Seth Garfield of Cuttyhunk Oyster, Joth Davis of Baywater Shellfish Company in Hood Canal and Chris Davis of Pemaquid Oyster Co.

The Malinowski family has been growing shellfish for 39 years. Sarah recalls that, “we ended up on Fishers Island accidentally and realized that being surrounded by water was the perfect environment for us. Once there, we were open to anything water-related, and Steve continued graduate work with the vague idea he might get to be Jacques Cousteau. But by the time he was done we had five

children and an image of a family farm began replacing dreams of wandering the oceans of the world.”

Steve started growing clams in sediment-filled trays, using SCU-BA gear to tend and harvest the crop. After seven painful years the couple recognized that this wasn’t a viable business model. They supported themselves with research grants, scallop restoration work, house painting and mooring work.

At this point they decided to pivot to growing oysters, largely because of their relationship with Matthiessen, who was growing seed oysters on Fishers Island for Cotuit Oyster Company, his grow-out operation on Cape Cod. In a stroke of luck around this same time they received a shipment of seed scallops that had some oyster seed mixed in, and they were delighted to discover that oysters thrived in suspension on their lease site. They dumped the clam idea and have been farming exclusively oysters ever since.

For almost 30 years the Malinowskis have been rearing their branded Fishers Island Oysters in lantern nets and shipping them directly to restaurants via UPS. They gradually built their farm from a small two- or three-person operation to a firm that now employs around 10 full-time employees, with another 10 high-school and college kids filling in during the

summer.

In 2000 they decided to build a small hatchery, and began selling seed around 2005. Pre-pandemic they were selling seed oysters to upwards of 75-85 growers. They now grow 40-50 million seed oysters in their hatchery (a repurposed dog kennel in the back yard). Seed are transferred to a salt pond for nursery culture—again following in Matthiessen’s footsteps. The pond is actually in the middle of a bird sanctuary, and the nutrient-rich waters support strong seed growth. Oysters are then either stocked in their own

lantern nets for grow-out or sold to other farmers in the Northeast.

Steve and Sarah also followed Carey’s example of doing everything on the cheap. “We are still patching together a falling-down shack Carey built,” says Sarah. “Our operation looks a bit like a

junkyard except that all the junk is in operation.”

Matthiessen preached that, “there is elegance in simplicity” and everyone he trained took that advice to heart. He liked to say, “Always go for the quickest, easiest solution and never spend money if you don’t have to.” He taught me that plastic garbage cans make adequate larval culture vessels and he proved that you can actually run a shellfish hatchery without electricity!



In this family photo dating back to the mid-1990s Steve and Sarah Malinowski pose with their five children after taking a break from harvesting bay scallop seed for a Peconic Bay restoration project.

Environmental consciousness

Sarah and Steve have always been environmentalists. Sarah grew up in Ohio next to the Cuyahoga River (which used to regularly catch on fire) and was involved in organizing early Earth Day events. As a child, Steve fished all the trout streams in Connecticut with his Dad, but as soon as he discovered the ocean he spent every extra minute on it. By seventh grade Steve had resolved to become the next Jacques Cousteau.

Sarah explained that, “our kids worked with us by default. Using tools to whack detritus off dried buoy lines is a great activity for high-energy kids. Any four-year old can paint the bottom of a boat, and we have the pictures to prove it. Our interests merged in this farming project. We had faith that we would be able to make enough money to send our kids to college. And we are very grateful for a lot of financial aid!”

Sarah describes how their philosophy developed as their farm and family grew. “We became students of environmental change and degradation. We watched our local lobster industry die and became convinced that aquaculture was the economic answer for coastal communities dependent on some kind of fishery. We did not know where our farm ended and our family began, but we knew growing populations were burdening the earth and we felt guilty for having so many children (when our last went off to college, we adopted another, so now we have six). Our concerns of overpopulation and a degrading ocean combined for a family and farm mantra: *The world has to be somehow better because we’re in it.* We have no right taking up precious space if we are not going to make a difference for the better.”

— Continued on page 3

HOT AQUACULTURE NEWS!!



Fish Farming News is the aquaculture industry's national newspaper, devoted exclusively to coverage and the betterment of domestic aquaculture.

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Fishers Island Farm

It is a philosophy that has been adopted by all of their kids, who have built careers centered around protecting the environment and promoting social justice. They are teachers, social workers, community organizers and environmental activists. Their son Pete has even managed to pull together oyster farming, social justice, education and environmentalism in his position as director of the Billion Oyster Project.

Sarah explains that, “prior to the pandemic, our biggest concern was climate change. We had worked out a direct-to-restaurant shipping system through UPS, which enabled us to stay on our island and get absolutely fresh oysters delivered to restaurants. We had satisfying partnerships with chefs, purchasers and owners who shared our story with their customers.”

When Bill Mook, of Mook Sea Farm, came up with the idea of shellfish farmers banding together to fight climate change, the Malinowskis were one of the first to sign up and throw their weight behind what has become the Shellfish Growers Climate Coalition (SGCC), a partnership with The Nature Conservancy whose mission is to show how climate change is already affecting U.S. food production by telling the stories of shellfish growers.

The SGCC has now grown to over 150 members. The environmentally focused work of the coalition and the Billion Oyster Project has capitalized on relationships made through shellfish organizations like the ECSGA, Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association and Oyster South, and expanded them. The SGCC is a grand coalition of friends, growers, chefs and environmentalists meeting monthly via Zoom, to schedule annual treks to Washington, D.C., and the Billion Oyster Party in Brooklyn.

Pandemic pivot

The Malinowskis are now pivoting to Farmers Markets and figuring out how to go “Dock to Door” by delivering oysters right to customers’ docks and driveways. They are collaborating with new types of distributors focused on providing a range of sustainably farmed products to their customers. Like just about everyone else, they have made shucking videos and

are telling their story themselves, instead of relying on a distributor or shucker behind the oyster bar.

“We love bragging that we are growing the most sustainable form of seafood on the planet,” Sarah said. “This allows us to get seafood directly to consumers more than ever before. We are building up the confidence of consumers who, pre-pandemic, would only eat seafood at a restaurant.”

They strongly believe that demystifying oysters, teaching folks to shuck, and bringing oysters home will increase consumers’ desire for oysters. To fill this demand, the Malinowskis predict a need for more oysters and therefore more oyster farms. “To us, this silver lining is thrilling,” Sarah added.

Sarah and Steve like to say “We are old folks in the industry, we’ve been through the wringer and we have plenty of advice. Feel free to take it all with a grain of sea salt except this one thing: Remember that what is good for your community is good for you. Be part of your community. Contribute to your community. Your community is the East Coast Shellfish Growers Association. If you haven’t already, join today. Help us help you.”



JULIE QIU/IN A HALFSHELL

The crew pulls in lantern nets filled with oysters from the growout site before taking them to the dock for picking and drying. This maintenance is a must to remove fouling organisms that build up and reduce the flow of the nutrient-rich waters through the nets.

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From the ECSGA President: The New Normal



President and New York Representative
Karen Rivara

I have been at work growing bivalve shellfish commercially for 37 years. I suppose that makes me an old-timer. As a business owner I have encountered many challenges and changes over the years. I have anticipated several risks that could threaten my business and planned accordingly. I figured I could be faced with losses from disease, predators and hurricanes. I even factored in a drop in demand due to an economic downturn and poor market conditions. I may even have considered wars.

However, a pandemic never made it to my worry list. Silly me. The literal overnight drop in demand certainly left us reeling and plagued with uncertainty. Many of us were sick with COVID-19 ourselves and are likely to know of

someone who suffered lasting effects or even passed away after contracting the virus.

As a seed producer I have a window into how individual growers view their futures. We are an optimistic group of entrepreneurs, not easily daunted. Some growers reduced their 2020 seed purchases by as much as half of the 2019 amount, others ordered additional species such as *Mercenaria* (hard clams). New growers are much more conservative about what they're ordering this year. But all in all, growers anticipate surviving this crisis and are buying seed in 2020 so they have something to harvest in 2021 and 2022 when the market rebounds.

When my customers receive their orders I hear stories about how they are doing. They are getting a lower price on the wholesale market, they have extra product right now, and they are concerned about selling product before it gets too big. They are also doing something else: implementing marketing plans they had only considered in the past when they were too busy with a rising market demand to try something new. Some are experimenting with value-added products, and many are selling direct to consumers.

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Captain Matt Ketcham, owner of Ketcham's Seafarm, offers a variety of items at his Peconic Gold Oysters farm stand on the east end of Long Island, N.Y. In addition to oysters in the shell, he offers shucked pints, shucking knives, and value-added products like oyster kimchi and oyster quiche.

On the North Fork of Long Island we are able to sell product not only at farmers markets, but also at local wineries and breweries. Last fall the Town of Southold updated the town code to allow for roadside stands as a point of sale for shellfish farmers. These stands have given growers the opportunity to sell their product from their homes directly to the consumer, which helps to pay the bills. These are not card tables with a cooler on top and a cash box. Oh no, we are shellfish farmers and savvy marketers. The stands are eye-appealing, or at least eye catching. The products sold are not just oysters in a bag, but also homemade sauces and shellfish prepared in ways that make it easy to take them home to eat. I have also heard from my customers from other states about their ventures into retail. Everyone is being creative.

Most growers I sell to say they are "doing ok," but certainly not doing as well as they would like. It is difficult to pivot and expand your product line in the midst of an economic downturn. Although not everyone is doing ok, it seems as if enough of us are surviving so we should have a viable industry when this is all over. We are resilient and should come out the other side with more diversified and viable businesses. We have a lot of young people in this industry with energy and enthusiasm, and enough old folks to pass on the institutional knowledge. We will survive this.

In the meantime, cover your face, maintain social distance while getting to know your consumer better and STAY HEALTHY.

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— Continued from page 1
NAP Crop Insurance

and FSA will waive this administrative fee for beginning, military-veteran, limited-resource, and historically underserved farmers.

The major complaint of shellfish growers is that NAP just doesn't pay! The FSA County Committee can act only on the information the grower and loss adjuster submit. In the absence of records, FSA will attempt to create a pre-storm inventory by applying a normal mortality rate to purchased seed. In order to develop a pre-storm inventory, some states in the Northeast will reduce your seed purchases by 95 percent to account for the normal mortality. But the FSA committees prefer to consider a grower's records to establish the pre-storm inventory, provided they have a high degree of confidence that the records are contemporaneous and accurate.

These records should include the date of the record; number of shellfish or bags, lines, cages, etc; and the size of the shellfish. Ideally, records should be written in ink and kept in bound notebooks. Better yet would be an inventory management software tool.

It is important for the grower to call FSA as soon as a loss is apparent so the agent can assign a loss adjuster to review and assess the claim. The loss adjuster will then conduct a post-storm appraisal, which involves recording the growing practices employed, selecting some representative samples, and counting the numbers of shellfish and their size. After the loss adjuster appraises the crop, the grower will have the opportunity to accept or challenge the appraisal before it is submitted to the FSA County Committee.

How are the normal mortality rates and prices established? Each state FSA Committee solicits data from industry experts to establish the baseline mortality info and prices for their state,

and submits those rates to Washington, D.C., for approval. The deadline to purchase a 2021 NAP policy is Sept. 1, 2020.

For more information on NAP, check out this fact sheet: www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/noninsured_crop_disaster_assistance_program-nap-fact_sheet.pdf

or contact your local FSA Office or URI Risk Management Specialists Paul Russell at pmrussell@umass.edu or Tom Smiarowski at tsmiarowski@umass.edu

This material is based on work supported by USDA/NIFA under Award Number 2018-70027-28588. URI Extension works in partnership with the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the Northeast Extension Risk Management Education Center to educate Rhode Island producers about Federal Crop Insurance and USDA Disaster Assistance Programs.

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A Message of Support from Pew and The Nature Conservancy

The Pew Charitable Trusts and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) know that COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the shellfish-farming community in the U.S. We also recognize the values that farmed shellfish bring to coastal communities—whether economic, environmental or cultural—and together we are exploring how our efforts to restore native oyster habitats might also help shellfish growers recover from this ongoing global pandemic.

Pew and TNC are working with the ECSGA, Oyster South, Native Olympia Oyster Collaborative and others to create a pathway for more growers to sell their overgrown and excess crop for use in local, shovel-ready restoration projects, as further stimulus funding becomes available.

Using large, farmed oysters for restoration is not a new concept. TNC's New Hampshire chapter already buys oversized oysters from growers for restoration projects¹, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Ser-



MEGAN LATOUR/TNC

A TNC reef restoration project in Great Bay, New Hampshire, testing the use of "Uglies," large oysters purchased from local growers to speed and enhance the ecosystem service delivery by the restored reef. Workers are shown deploying substrate.

vice's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) supports farmers² in some states who grow spat-on-shell for a season before the oysters are brought to restoration sites. With restoration opportunities in most coastal states, we think the scale of these efforts could be increased, thereby removing some "excess" product from the market, and doing so would support shellfish aquaculture businesses and

jobs while boosting conservation efforts at the same time. With native wild oyster populations across the East, West and Gulf coasts at a fraction of what they once were, the problem growers are facing right now—too many oysters without buyers—could actually be part of the solution.

Pew, TNC and our partners are assessing opportunities for states, growers and restoration groups, examining what could be possible, and gathering the project-level information to enable oyster growers and restoration practitioners to take advantage of COVID-19 relief funds that could be made available. We also plan to collaborate with state and federal regulators and others involved to build on existing knowledge and consider the relevant information an agency would need to administer these funds or track these projects. Among the key issues will be equity, the potential impacts on jobs, and biosecurity restrictions on how far oysters can be moved.

TNC has long been invested in the shellfish-farming community³, working on scientific collaborations across the industry, quantifying ecosystem services provided by farmed oysters⁴, working hand-in-hand with farmers to create the Shellfish Growers Climate Coalition⁵, and more. Pew is working with partners⁶ already engaged in coastal conservation efforts to help determine the best ways to contribute, advancing durable, ecosystem-based solutions to some of the country's most pressing marine conservation issues.

We hope that new funding, partnerships and innovative approaches can provide some relief while also improving coastal habitat, water quality and native oyster populations. Since restoration projects are being managed by the states, if you want to participate you should contact your state's aquaculture extension personnel, your state aquaculture association or your county Farm Service Agency office.

Sincerely,

*The Nature Conservancy,
The Pew Charitable Trusts*

Footnotes:

1. www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/united-states/new-hampshire/oyster-restoration-in-the-great-bay-estuary

2. www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip

3. www.nature.org/en-us/what-we-do/our-insights/perspectives/the-aquaculture-opportunity/?vu=aquaculture

4. www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/priority-landscapes/chesapeake-bay/aquaculture-by-design-chesapeake-bay

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Mass. Marine Aquaculture Permitting Tool Website Goes Live

The complex regulatory environment of both state and federal aquaculture has presented perennial challenges for the aquaculture industry. In surveys dating back to the mid-1990s, and as recently as last year by the Massachusetts Shellfish Initiative, respondents expressed a clear need for guidance in navigating the Massachusetts aquaculture permitting process.

With funding from the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, in partnership with the University of Massachusetts-Boston, NOAA Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, and the Cape Cod Cooperative Extension, growers got their wish: a new accessible, web-based tool, the Massachusetts Aquaculture Permitting website www.massaquaculturepermitting.org.

Similar to other portals in Alabama (alaculture.com/#prospectivehome) and California (www.sbcosap.org), the website steps Massachusetts growers sequentially through local, state, and federal permitting requirements. Keeping in mind the needs of growers, the website provides a one-stop shop for information about the costs, timelines and permit applications for each step, as well as resources for new growers and detailed steps for the annual reporting process. It also provides information related to preventing negative impacts to fisheries habitats, protected species, and public access of shared coastal waters.

Predictability in permitting is essential for aquaculture businesses and investors. Farmers need to know what to expect from permitting agencies in order to make investments, while permitting agencies need to know that farmers have considered alternatives and that projects are designed to avoid and minimize the impact on the environment and on other user groups. This tool was developed to take the mystery out of the complicated, multi-step process that Massachusetts growers struggled to navigate. The aquaculture permitting website provides the framework to make the overall permitting process more accessible, identify important decision-making points along the way, and enable greater efficiency preparing and submitting applications.

For questions or comments on the website, contact website coordinator Dr. Kathryn Ford, bkathryn.ford@mass.gov or (508) 742-9749.

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Support from Pew and TNC

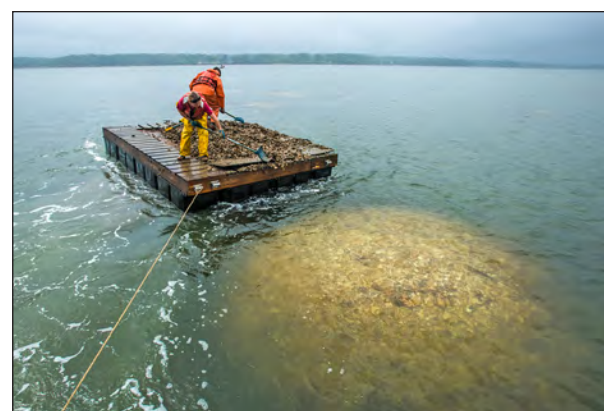
5. www.nature.org/en-us/what-we-do/our-priorities/tackle-climate-change/climate-change-stories/shellfish-growers-climate-coalition

6. www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2020/07/08/atlantic-and-gulf-coast-oyster-reefs-are-at-historic-lows-but-can-recover



TNC

A collection of "Uglies," that are definitely not raw-bar material, sampled in July 2020.



JOE KLEMENTOVICH/TNC

Spat-on-shell is added to the reef restoration at the Great Bay site.




Jesse Fortune
Owner/President
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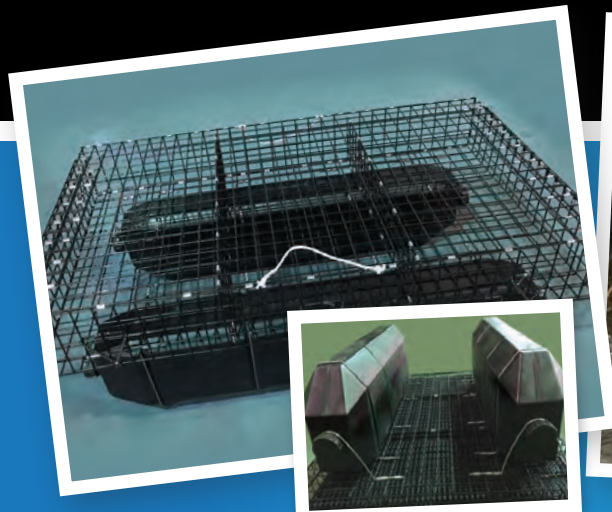
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U.S. Agriculture Policy and Price Supports

by Robert Rheault,
ECSCGA Executive Director

U.S. agricultural policy has a rich history. For generations our government has offered incentives for growers to expand production, in order to grow more food to meet the needs of a rapidly growing population. In 1933, with many farmers losing money because of the Great Depression, FDR signed the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), which aimed to regulate farming and destroy excess production, thereby ensuring that prices remained at levels high enough to preserve the nation's farms. The government recognized that if harvests exceed demand (for whatever reason) the impact of that excess product on the markets often results in price collapses, which can drive many farmers out of business. In agriculture (more so than in manufacturing), market forces of supply and demand were too sluggish and unpredictable to keep farmers farming.

Over time, a series of legislative efforts (now known as the Farm Bill) sought to improve farm subsidies and crop-insurance programs to compensate for the unpredictable nature of farming and to prevent huge swings in prices that result in similar oscillations in effort and production. Our nation recognizes that viable farms are important, and that we must ensure that farms can survive through storms and disasters, as well as precipitous drops in crop prices caused by oversupply.

Farm subsidies have been used to stabilize the price and supply of agricultural commodities since the passage of the original AAA in 1933. Originally only seven commodities were covered: corn, wheat, cotton, rice, peanuts, tobacco and milk. In subsequent years the Farm Bill has added numerous crops to the list, while dozens of other programs have been created to take some of the risk out of farming. Many farms are now able to take advantage of payments to remove land from production, as well as crop insurance programs that compensate for disasters or calamitous price drops.

Unfortunately, shellfish farms are not well covered by these programs. Despite the fact that shellfish farming is perhaps one of the riskiest agricultural enterprises, we have only one crop insurance product widely available to us: the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP, explained on p.1). When it comes to other subsidies, like price supports, we have never qualified. In the last Farm Bill the ECSCGA succeeded in getting the USDA Risk Management Agency to modify their Whole Farm Revenue Protection policy to include shellfish farms, and we



KIMBERLY ELBE/GOLDEN E DAIRY FARM

A tanker full of milk being dumped in April during the COVID-19 crisis.

remain hopeful that the program will eventually be implemented. It not only insures growers against natural disasters, but also can help farmers survive steep drops in prices.

Section 32

Another program we are pushing hard to qualify for is Section 32, the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service program, but it appears to be a heavy lift. Section 32 funding is used to purchase excess agricultural products from producers and donate them to food banks, schools and institutional kitchens, taking excess production off the market in order to head off big price drops.

Whenever you have excess product sloshing around in a market, some sellers are likely to get desperate and will drop their price to see if they can steal a sale from one of their competi-

tors. In cases of significant oversupply, these actions will snowball in a destructive "race to the bottom" and prices will collapse. This is how we got to a negative price for oil a few months ago. And this is why you see farmers destroying their crops and flushing milk into storm drains. The Section 32 program was created to avert these price swings and ensure that farms can stay in business by taking the excess commodities off the market and donating them to people in need.

One of the unique challenges of the current crisis for our industry is that despite a few months of disastrous sales, many of us are still holding on to our inventory. If sales were to bounce back tomorrow, most of us would be fine by the end of the year. While many have seen their markets recover somewhat over the past month, most growers are not optimistic about the chances of a happy ending. As our product continues to grow it will eventually get too big for the preferred raw-bar trade and we will have to accept a lower price for the shucked-meat market. While prices vary regionally, this is typically at least a 50 percent loss in revenue (often more).

Predicting future markets is always difficult, and the events of this year have made it even tougher. The virus could "go away" as some have opined, or it could continue to rage for many months. We have learned that up to 90 percent of oysters are consumed in restaurants, 35 percent of which are now shut down. With sharp seating capacity reductions in those that have managed to reopen, OpenTable.com estimates that the number of sit-down diners is down by roughly 60 percent compared to this

— Continued on page 11

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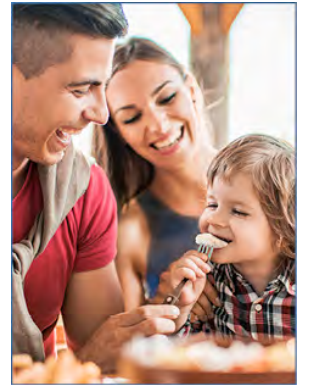


Advice for Moms-to-be: Increase Seafood in Your Diet for Healthier Babies

The Scientific Report of the 2020 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, recently published by the federal government, strongly recommends increasing the amount of seafood (fish and shellfish) in the diets of women who may become pregnant, who are pregnant and who are breast-feeding. The report recommends eating from 8-12 ounces of fish and shellfish per week as part of a well-balanced diet that can improve maternal health and lead to children's healthy development.

That works out to two or three servings per week, or 26-39 pounds per year. On average, Americans consume far less seafood each year, only about 16 pounds.

Some studies have shown that eating fish before and during pregnancy may improve brain function, motor skills, language and communication in young children. Other research suggests that increased seafood consumption may help mothers carry their babies to term, prevent low birth weight, and reduce the incidence of gestational diabetes and hypertensive disorders. Regular seafood consumption has also been implicated in improving mothers' moods, especially in cases of post-partum depression.



Women who are pregnant, may become pregnant or are breast-feeding, as well as young children, should avoid eating long-lived, deep-water marine fish that can accumulate mercury. Selecting species low in mercury, like farm-raised salmon, catfish, trout, tilapia, oysters and clams, is best. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provide joint guidance at: www.fda.gov/food/consumers/advice-about-eating-fish

The report strongly advises increasing seafood consumption at all ages to help live a happier and healthier life. It recommends prioritizing seafood consumption beginning with toddlers to increase important "shortfall" nutrients, including zinc, choline, iron and long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids, as well as to help develop healthy dietary preferences that will last a lifetime.

Cardiovascular disease, type-2 diabetes and obesity are rampant in the United States, but increasing seafood consumption may help reduce their incidence. Seafood contains high-quality, complete

— Continued on page 11



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— Continued from page 9

Price Supports

week last year. One analyst called this crisis “an extinction event for independent restaurants.” It’s anybody’s guess how many restaurants will be able to survive reduced-capacity seating.

None of this bodes well for our industry. As growers become desperate to sell product before it gets too large, some will feel compelled to cut prices; if the “race to the bottom” starts to snowball, pretty soon no one will be making a profit. I doubt that too many growers could sustain a 30-40 percent decline in revenue.

I see it as my job to try and get some product off the market before the downward price spiral gets worse. I have been pushing hard for a Section 32 purchase of oysters and clams, and have been pursuing efforts to plant large oysters on sanctuary reefs. So far we have found a home for a couple of million oysters, but with annual harvests of about 200 million we have a long way to go.

— Continued from page 10

More Seafood for Moms and Kids

protein and important vitamins and minerals, while being low in calories, cholesterol and saturated fats. The important omega-3 fatty acids, eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), found in fatty fish and other marine products may play an important role in reducing deaths from heart disease and stroke.

The best advice for a healthy diet is to make sure to eat a variety of fish and shellfish at least twice a week. Fish and shellfish accompanied by vegetables makes an ideal meal. Think oysters Rockefeller paired with oven-roasted vegetables, or clams linguine with a nice green salad. It’s elegant, inviting, and best of all, good for you.

To read or download the full report, visit www.dietaryguidelines.gov/2020-advisory-committee-report


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Zinc: The Miracle Drug?

We have long recognized that shellfish contain high levels of zinc, and many articles have extolled the virtues of a diet rich in zinc. I recently stumbled across a comprehensive review at www.foundmyfitness.com/topics/zinc that examined more than 200 medical studies on the effects of zinc. Fun facts:

- ❑ Zinc modulates the activity of more than 300 enzymes and 2,000 transcription factors that are involved in numerous processes such as immune function, protein synthesis, wound healing, DNA synthesis and cell division.
- ❑ Multiple in-vitro studies identified zinc (and other compounds that stimulate cellular zinc import) as inhibitors of RNA viruses (such as the ones that cause SARS and COVID-19).

❑ Zinc modulates numerous aspects of the immune system and is essential for its proper functioning. It is effective at fighting certain types of bacteria such as *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, which can lead to pneumonia, meningitis and other serious infectious diseases. Zinc also helps control infections by suppressing excess inflammatory signals mediated by the innate immune system.

- ❑ Multiple studies have shown that cold sufferers who took over-the-counter zinc lozenges (more than 75 mg daily) recovered up to 40 percent faster.
- ❑ Zinc is a co-factor and structural component of numerous proteins involved in gene regulation, DNA repair, signal transduction and antioxidant defense. Clinical studies have found that inadequate zinc intake leads to an increase in DNA damage. A modest increase of 4 mg/day of zinc also induced a global increase in serum proteins involved in DNA repair, antioxidant defense and anti-inflammatory activity.
- ❑ Researchers estimate that people older than 65 are getting less than half the recommended daily amount of zinc. Therefore, zinc supplementation may reduce age-associated inflammation and immune dysfunction. A small study of 50 older people (aged 55 to 87)

showed that those on the zinc supplements had one fifth as many infections as those taking the placebo!

- ❑ Eight of twelve studies found that oral zinc supple-



INTERNATIONAL ZINC ASSOCIATION

ments of 30 to 150 mg significantly improved acne compared to a placebo.

- ❑ Many diseases impact the body’s absorption of zinc, including inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) and Crohn’s disease. HIV and certain other infections can cause the body to sequester zinc in the liver, leading to lowered serum zinc concentrations.
- ❑ Several studies involving thousands of children looked at small-dose (10 mg/day) zinc supplementation. While the results in very young kids were inconclusive, the results for children over 12 months old suggest that supplementation may be effective in improving growth outcomes, decreasing the incidence of diarrhea, and reducing death rates.
- ❑ A few small trials seem to indicate that zinc may reduce depression.
- ❑ Zinc supplementation can cause health problems, and is associated with both acute and

chronic toxicity. Doses between 50 and 150 mg/day can cause acute gastrointestinal discomfort, diarrhea and nausea, while doses over 200 mg/day can cause acute vomiting. Other potential negative health outcomes from zinc supplementation include benign prostatic hyperplasia, prostate cancer and permanent loss of smell (associated with zinc nasal sprays). There may be drug interactions, so ask your doctor before rushing out to buy supplements.

I think the take-home message is, *Don’t overdo it*. Dietary zinc is probably always safer than supplements. Vegetarians, people over 50 and those with various intestinal disorders may have lower serum zinc levels and should probably consider adding shellfish to their diet. Oysters contain particularly high amounts, with six medium oysters providing around 32 mg of zinc. Other shellfish are not quite as rich in zinc, but all shellfish, meat and fish are good sources.

—RBR

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| Grower | \$300,000 to 1 million | \$1,000 |
| Grower | \$1 million to \$3 million | \$2,000 |
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| Shellfish Dealers and Equipment Suppliers | | \$250 |
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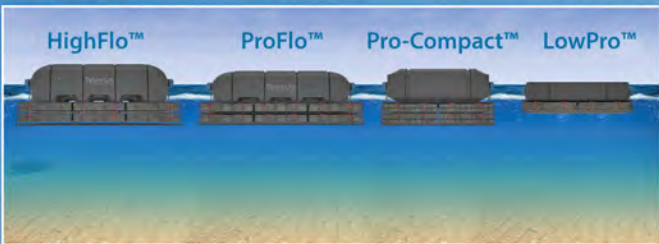
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