



Catfish Controversy: U.S. Catfish Producers await USDA Decision

U.S. catfish producers have had more on their mind lately than either the recent cold weather threatening their aquaculture farms or the 25 percent decrease in production due to the nation's economic woes. Competition from Vietnamese catfish imports into the United States has certainly affected domestic production, but it has also raised eyebrows over concerns that these imports are not meeting the health standards of domestic catfish products.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has historically been in charge of seafood inspection, but U.S. catfish producers feel that these inspections are inadequate and are a threat to American consumers. In 2009 seafood imports totaled five billion pounds, only 2 percent of which the FDA checked. Slipped into the 2008 farm bill, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) will soon be in charge of setting and enforcing regulatory measures for ensuring quality of all domestic and imported catfish. The wait, though, is to see just how stringent the criteria will be. The USDA's verdict was expected in February.

The opposition towards the jurisdictional switch claims that U.S. catfish producers are trying to reduce foreign competition by making the importation process more difficult. Indeed, five billion pounds of imported seafood makes it understandably harder for American seafood producers to compete for business. However, the Catfish Farmers of America say that this is purely a health issue and that they want foreign imports to be held to the same rigorous standards as domestic catfish. Contaminants, such as antibiotics, in the imported filets are the main cause of concern in the U.S. and countries in Europe and the Middle East.

The Vietnamese catfish in question are in the order Siluriformes, the same as our familiar channel catfish that are the primary catfish raised and sold by U.S. producers. Vietnamese catfish, however, are in the family Pangasiidae, the genus *Pangasius*, and are commonly known as shark catfish, iridescent shark or simply pangasius. The most commonly exported of these fish are basa, tra and pangasius, which are raised along the Mekong River. Sold in many supermarkets, most consumers find these fish similar in taste and appearance to channel cats, a mild taste and white flesh.

A change in inspection criteria would undoubtedly strain Vietnam's revenue brought in from pangasius. A recent report from a Vietnamese newspaper said that the Mekong Delta region plans to produce 2.4 million tons of seafood in 2010 (up from 1.96 million tons last year), and has indicated that 8,000 ha would be allocated for pangasius (up from 6,788 ha last year). Restricting exports would

threaten this growing operation, and would jeopardize the jobs of thousands of people in this industry. The USDA's decision takes on even more importance when realizing that Vietnam is a large importer of U.S. beef. Altering trade regulations for pangasius with Vietnam could ultimately result in harmful repercussions for other U.S. exports.

- William Sheftall IV

Sources:

Bennett, David. 2010. Catfish farmers frustrated by USDA delay on pangasius inspection decision, now expected in February. Delta Farm Press.

<http://deltafarmpress.com/news/catfish-imports-1117/>

<http://www.seafoodbusiness.com/index.asp?ItemID=4242&rcid=180&pcid=178&cid=180>

Royal Purple - Closer to Home Than You Think!

With the Mardi Gras and Lenten season upon us, it seems that the color purple is being seen everywhere. In 1872, the parade crew of 'King' Rex officially designated royal purple as one of the three colors of Mardi Gras. Not to be left out of the festivities, Louisiana State University likewise chose the royal purple and gold, from the pre-designated Mardi Gras theme, for the "war banner" of the mighty Fighting Tigers.

The regality of the color purple (ecclesiastical, political or academic) evolves from the prized robes of the Roman nobility, such as Julius Caesar, Augustus Caesar and Nero. So guarded were these vivid purple garments, that edicts issued by the three mentioned rulers stated that wearing of such cloth by a commoner was punishable by death. Later, this color was incorporated from emperors into religious vestments. Christianity and Judaism alike have variations on the purple color which have become somewhat mandatory for believers and events. Indeed, Christ himself is reported to have been cloaked by the Roman legionnaires with royal purple as the "King of the Jews."



Religious vestments. Photo credit: BBC/UK

The exclusivity and honor of these royal purple robes, however, was simple. The vivid color was the unique result of a dye which came only from the secretions of the hypobranchial gland of the sea snails in the family *Muricidae* or *Thaididae*. In the days of the Phoenicians, the purple/blue dye was used to color drawings on ceramic objects. In the first century, Pliny the Elder documented the use of the snail secretions as a dye for fabrics. Silk and wool would accept the colorant best, but could be used on almost any textile. Several species of sea snails were known to be dye producers. The tiny amounts of secretion produced by each snail required some 10,000 individual animals to produce dye for one kilogram of vibrantly colored

wool. Snail collection, dying and finishing out the robes rendered a very expensive garment, then affordable only to the very wealthiest of nobility.

One of the snail species historically used for purple dye was *Thais haemastoma* - yes, our very own Louisiana oyster drill, presently common as mosquitoes in the saltier marsh waters of our coast. Other than the occasional and localized culinary use of snails cooked body in Cajun preparations

of “bigoneaux” stews (see YouTube video linked below), the biggest claim to fame of the Louisiana oyster drill is as the arch-predator of the prized Louisiana oyster. The oyster drill is thought to do millions of dollars in damage to the oyster industry by mechanically boring the shell, killing the animal and consuming the oyster flesh. The purple dye secreted by the *Thais* snail is really a toxin used in the predation process on the oyster. This snail is no friend to the oystermen of the Gulf Coast and their eradication from oyster beds is privately and publically encouraged.



Thais haemastoma. Photo credit: Mohammed Ghassen Nouira

The resultant finish colors from the hypobranchial fluid can vary from intense to subdued, depending on the textile source and repetitions of the dye applied. Although the use of Mediterranean snail dye declined in the 8th Century to be replaced by cheaper methods of coloration (some biological and some synthetic), current use of snail dye is globally very limited. One such artisanal community is the Borucas Indians of western Costa Rica where they still hand-dye local cotton cord with the dye of the marine snail, *Plicopurpura pansa*. Though plentiful in our state, no documentation has been found of our local *Thais* oyster drill ever being used as a source of dye.

That being said, whenever I see large bolts of billowing purple cloth outside of homes and churches during the Mardi Gras/Lenten season, I can't help but think of the connection between our humble Louisiana oyster drill and the grand splendor of Julius Caesar, emperor of the Great Roman Empire.

- Rusty Gaude'



Borucas Indians snail dyed cotton purse. Photo credit: Rusty Gaude'

Sources:

<http://spo.nwr.noaa.gov/tr35.pdf>

<http://www.chriscooksey.demon.co.uk/tyrian/index.html>

<http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/200604/millennia.of.murex.htm>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4e4og8bBvxA&feature=Playlist&p=0CA792869B1B7087&index=17>

DEMORAN, W. 1. 1961. Preliminary studies on the effect of the purple dye of the oyster drill *Thais haemastoma* on the oyster. 1. Miss. Acad. Sci. 6:93-95.

Lagniappe Fisheries Newsletter

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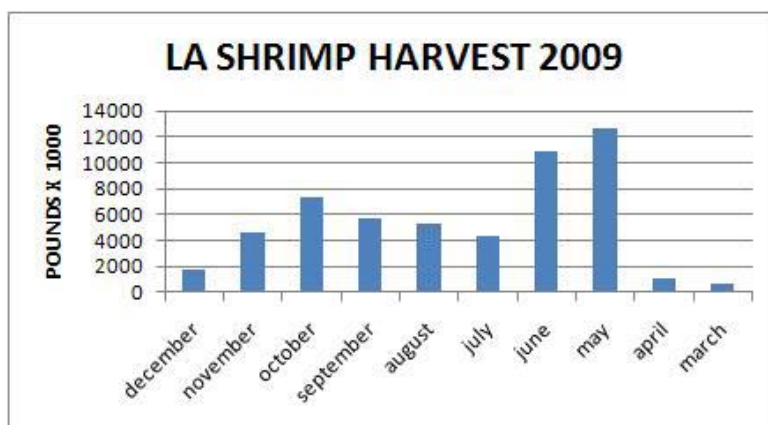
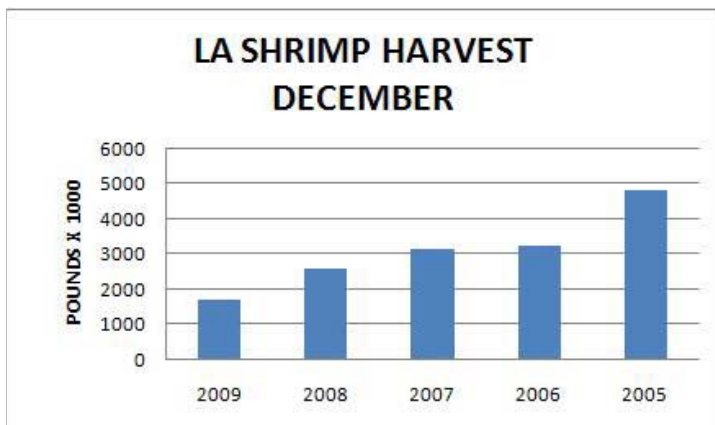
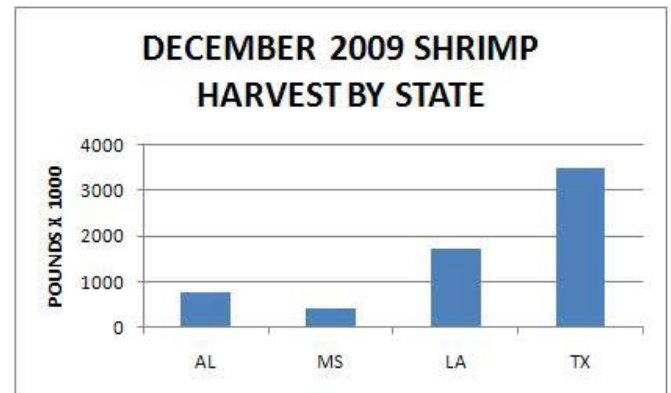
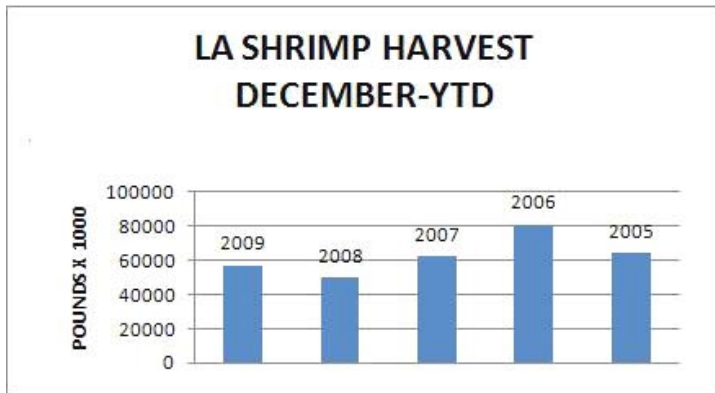
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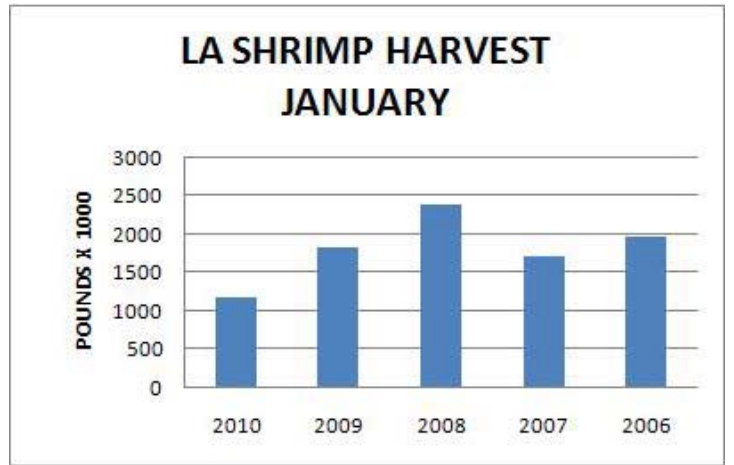
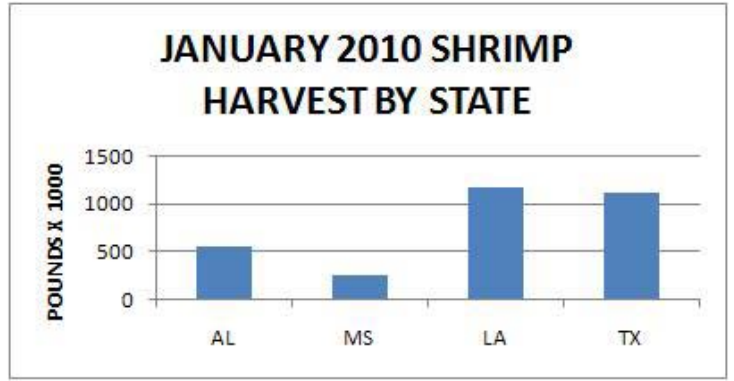
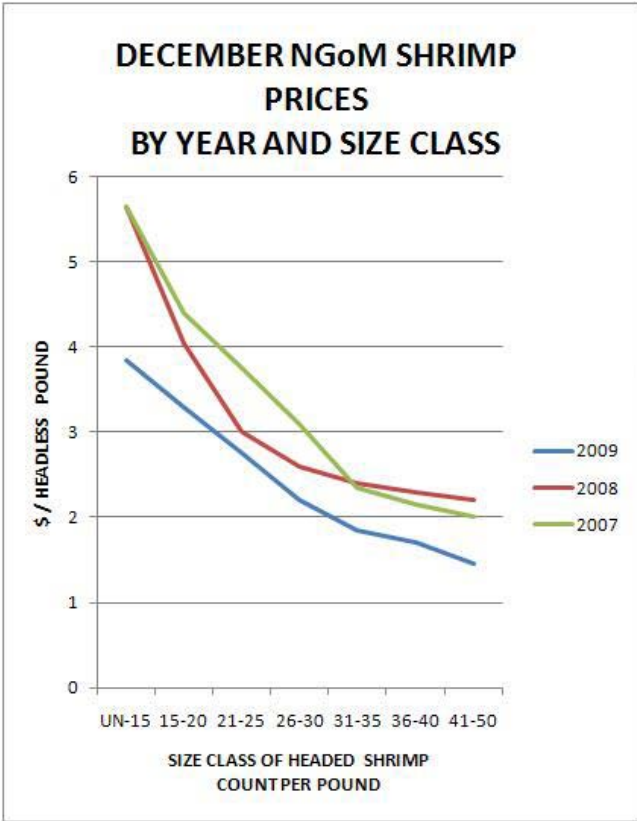
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Louisiana Shrimp Watch

Louisiana specific data portrayed in the graphics are selected from preliminary data posted by NOAA on their Web site. All data portrayed are subject to final revision and approval by NOAA. Shrimp landings are ex-vessel prices, inclusive of all species harvested. Missing, inadequate or withheld reports are portrayed as 'zero' in these graphics. Price graphics reflect central Gulf states only (Texas and Florida are reported independently). For more information, please refer to: www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/market_news/index.html

- Rusty Gaudé





Growing Cocahoe Minnows for Live Bait

Production, distribution and selling cocahoe minnows as live baitfish is the focus of a series of workshops hosted by the LSU AgCenter and Louisiana Sea Grant.

The next workshop will be Monday, March 15, 6-8pm, at the Central Fire Station in Galliano, 17462 W. Main Street, Cutoff, and focus on pond and tank culture. Topics to be covered include: history of culture, diseases, advantages/disadvantages; brood stock and reproduction methods; holding, handling and transportation; and infrastructure considerations and culture system diversity/scenarios. All workshops are free and open to the public.

Live bait for saltwater angling in Louisiana is a seasonally available commodity, due to the reliance on wild-caught bait. Cultured cocahoe minnows could help supplement the wild-caught baitfish supply, and be a valuable revenue source for cocahoe growers. The cocahoe minnow, *Fundulus grandis*, is popular bait for redfish, speckled trout, flounder and many other species.

For additional information, please contact Sunny Brogan, LSU Extension associate, at (225)765-2848 or sbrogan@agcenter.lsu.edu.

Underwater Obstructions

In accordance with the provisions of R.S. 56:700.1 et. seq., notice is given that 17 claims in the amount of \$68,540.52 were received for payment during the period November 1, 2009 - December 31, 2009. There were 16 claims paid and 1 claim denied. Latitude/Longitude Coordinates of reported underwater obstructions are:

29 04.188	90 31.300	TERREBONNE
29 04.527	90 14.011	LAFOURCHE
29 04.905	90 53.966	TERREBONNE
29 05.000	90 46.480	TERREBONNE
29 08.675	90 31.806	TERREBONNE
29 12.520	90 55.560	TERREBONNE
29 13.768	89 32.694	PLAQUEMINES
29 16.007	89 56.971	JEFFERSON
29 40.863	89 36.695	ST. BERNARD
29 42.002	89 46.530	PLAQUEMINES
29 48.457	91 56.338	IBERIA
29 49.774	89 40.627	ST. BERNARD
29 51.963	89 20.793	ST. BERNARD
29 52.544	90 26.352	TERREBONNE
30 11.134	89 55.217	ST. TAMMANY
90 02.300	29 34.159	JEFFERSON
90 02.300	29 34.159	JEFFERSON

A list of claimants and amounts paid can be obtained from Gwendolyn Thomas, Administrator, Fishermen's Gear Compensation Fund, P.O. Box 44277, Baton Rouge, LA 70804 or you can call (225)342-0122.

THE GUMBO POT

Teriyaki Tuna Jerky

Many people want to eat a healthy, balanced diet and fish has a large part to play in this. Tuna in particular is noted for its nutritional value, offering vitamins, minerals and protein. Its importance is mainly due to the presence of Omega-3 fatty acids, which are said to decrease the risk of heart disease and strokes. This type of fatty acid also helps to control blood pressure, lower cholesterol levels, and may decrease pain from arthritis.

Both yellowfin tuna and blackfin tuna are available to Louisiana's fishermen the year around; yellowfin can also be found as either fresh or frozen product in many of our larger supermarkets. Tuna is ideally suited to the making of fish jerky because the raw meat is the perfect medium for absorbing the flavors of a marinade. The recipe below can also be used with other fishes such as Spanish mackerel, king mackerel, and red snapper.

¼ cup teriyaki sauce
2 tablespoons water
2 tablespoons brown sugar
1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon minced garlic
¼ teaspoon dried tarragon
1-2 pounds tuna steak

With a sharp knife, cut the tuna into strips about 1/4" to 3/8" thick. Mix all marinade ingredients and allow the flavors to blend for 15 minutes. In either a non-metallic covered container or airtight plastic bag, add strips to marinade and refrigerate overnight. Place tuna strips on smoker or dehydrator racks and allow to air dry for about one hour. Smoke the strips at 180-200 degrees with the wood of your choice (mesquite, alder, and pecan work well), or dry in dehydrator until they achieve a chewy consistency. Refrigerate the leftovers.

Recipe adapted from *Just Jerky: the Complete Guide to Making It* by Mary Bell.



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