



FROM: Virginia Marine Products Board
554 Denbigh Blvd., Suite B
Newport News, VA 23608

CONTACT: Mike Hutt
Executive Director
Tel: 757-874-3474
Fax: 757-886-0671
www.virginiaseafood.org

FACTS ABOUT THE VIRGINIA SEAFOOD INDUSTRY 2024

- The Virginia seafood industry is one of the oldest industries in the United States and one of the Commonwealth's largest. The Virginia Seafood AREC in Hampton reported in their study titled Economic Contributions of the Virginia Seafood Industry that the seafood industries economic impact was over 1.1 billion dollars in 2019. Virginia also ranks third in the nation based on the 2022 National Marine Fisheries Service data.
- Virginia is the nation's third largest producer of marine products with total landings of **342,497,397** pounds in 2022 and is only out paced by Alaska and Louisiana. The dockside value to watermen alone was **\$168,976,804**. We also rank as the largest seafood production state on the East Coast. As of 2022 Reedville, VA is the fourth largest U.S. fishing port in the nation based on landings.
- Virginia's watermen harvest 50 commercially valuable species from some 630,000 acres of water. Among these traditional species in order of economic value, are Menhaden, Oysters, Blue Crabs, Clams, Sea Scallops, Summer Flounder, Striped Bass, Blue Catfish, Conch, and Spot. Watermen are also harvesting more non-traditional products for the international market such as Illex Squid and Monkfish.
- According to a 2018 report by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science on Virginia's Shellfish and Aquaculture Situation and Outlook; continued growth of the shellfish aquaculture industry in Virginia has added significant value to the state's seafood marketplace. Virginia's watermen-farmers are providing consumers with a growing quantity of hard clams and oysters that represents over \$53 million dockside value.

- According to the 2018 report by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science on Virginia's Shellfish and Aquaculture Situation and Outlook, Virginia continues to lead the nation in hard clam aquaculture production. Virginia aquaculture grown clams reported that 503.7 million clams were planted in 2018. VIMS also reports that Virginia is first on the east coast of the U.S. for Eastern Oyster production. Market oysters sold in Virginia in 2018 totaled 32.1 million.* Full time employment in the clam and oyster aquaculture industry is estimated at 480. This information is based on a report by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science.
- Virginia is home to over 248 licensed seafood buyers in Virginia. Approximately 4,619 Virginians work on the water-2,550 licensed watermen, their mates, and helpers.
- Virginia commercial watermen annually harvest enough seafood to produce over 123,000,000 meals.
- Ninety percent of the seafood harvested in Virginia is harvested by day boats. Fish and shellfish are harvested, processed and shipped within 24 hours to domestic and international markets.
- Based on the College of William and Mary, Virginia Institute of Marine Science research, forty-five counties and cities in Virginia have substantial economic dependency on the seafood industry.
- According to Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services statistics, Virginia seafood exports totaled \$32.17 million in 2023 to 13 countries. The top countries where Virginia seafood exported are Canada, Belgium, and France, with Belgium being a new market for Virginia Seafood.
- Watermen and processors in Virginia work under economic conditions, environmental conditions and regulations that provide sustainable seafood for current customers and for future generations in the business. State and federal law set standards and regulations to ensure sustainable use and equitable distribution of the resource. The Potomac River Fisheries Commission, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission all manage our fisheries.

- Virginia's quality control and regulatory standards for water quality and processing plants are recognized among the most stringent in the nation. Virginia's water and product are policed by a number of regulatory agencies, including the Food and Drug Administration; Department of Agriculture; Virginia Department of Health, Division of Shellfish Sanitation; and Virginia Marine Resources Commission. All plants have a HACCP-trained seafood safety inspector on staff. Additionally, Virginia Tech scientists and engineers work with processors to monitor and improve control procedures in shellfish and finfish plants throughout the state.
- According to the latest data (2021) from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Americans consumed **20.5** pounds of fish and shellfish per person. Menhaden, Oysters, Blue Crabs, Clams, Sea Scallops, Summer Flounder, Striped Bass, Blue Catfish, Conch, and Spot were the "Top Ten" most popular seafood items in 2022.
- Virginia is one of the largest US suppliers of fish oil and protein products from menhaden. This herring-like fish is found in abundant quantities in coastal waters off the US mid-Atlantic. Menhaden oil, which is rich in long-chain Omega-3 essential fatty acids, is used as a food ingredient and is available in capsules as a nutritional supplement.

ABOUT THE VIRGINIA MARINE PRODUCTS BOARD

- The Virginia Marine Products Board is the marketing arm of the seafood industry. In this capacity, the board conducts a comprehensive marketing program designed to upgrade and expand both domestic and foreign sales and markets to further the overall economic development of the industry.
- It is an internationally recognized marketing board within the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services comprised of eleven members appointed by the Governor including representatives from large and small processing firms, the menhaden industry, commercial harvesters, wholesale/distributors and exporters.
- All funds are received from industry license fees not from general funds of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Virginia's seafood marketing budget is approximately \$300,000.

- The board staff conducts trade advertising, direct marketing, trade shows, marketing calls and merchandising programs for wholesale distributors, retailers and restaurateurs. The staff also works with grocery chain stores in helping to promote Virginia seafood to their customers. The board has launched an in-state public education program to help the Commonwealth citizens understand the part the seafood industry plays in the state's tradition and economy, as well as the part citizens can play in keeping Virginia's waterways clean. The staff also maintains an up-to-date web site at www.virginiaseafood.org. We have added retail store locations in Virginia where you can purchase Virginia seafood. Also linked to the web site is an Aquaculture Oyster Website, or you can directly to the site at www.virginiaoysters.org where you can find the Aquaculture Growers Directory.
- Virginia Marine Products Board has developed cooperative programs with numerous groups such as the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Southern United States Trade Association, and the Virginia Tourism Corporation to open new markets and increase seafood demand without increasing costs to the board.
- The Board's promotional programs have earned a number of awards, including two internationally prestigious Marketing Excellence Awards from *Seafood Business* magazine, numerous ADDY awards and international exhibit design awards.
- Industry "firsts" have included the first point-of-purchase video for the industry, a unique seafood quality video, the first direct marketing program in the industry, the first state-branded seafood program, the first chef's Seafood Challenge and consumer recipe contest, and the first retail value added program.

Source: Virginia Marine Resources Commission, NOAA/United States Department of Commerce

*All aquaculture figures are from 2018, due to COVID-19 a report for 2019 figures was unable to be completed by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science.