USDA RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR MARINE FINFISH AQUACULTURE

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USDA research support for marine finfish aquaculture is delivered through intramural and extramural programs at the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), respectively. These programs have the overall mission of supporting research that delivers technologies that improve domestic aquaculture production efficiency and product quality while minimizing impacts on our natural resources. ARS conducts research under the ARS National Program for Aquaculture at 10 different locations through 14 projects performed by 50 ARS scientists and in funded collaborations with 12 cooperating institutions. NIFA provides support for aquaculture research, technology development and extension programs through formula grants, competitive funding opportunities, or Congressionally directed grants including support of the Regional Aquaculture Centers, the Aquaculture Special Research Program, and up to 14 competitions for which aquaculture researchers are eligible to apply. Many of these programs in ARS and NIFA are able to support marine finfish aquaculture.

In the 2019 NOAA publication Fisheries of the United States, harvests from U.S. commercial capture fisheries were reported for over 85 individual marine finfish species. These species, for which markets already exist, are excellent candidates for developing aquaculture industries that will meet increasing demands for seafood through domestic production. In addition, there is aquaculture potential for many other species that have markets that are too small to quantify, resulting in a combined list of over 100 native candidate species. Furthermore, non-native finfish species that are imported for U.S. consumption are candidates for domestic aquaculture production in land-based closed containment systems. USDA agencies will seek to develop partnerships in support of optimizing production efficiency for promising marine finfish, provide information and technologies that facilitate expansion of domestic aquaculture in state and federal marine waters where permissible, and support research that enhances land-based production systems.