

CATFISH PROCESSING



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STATISTICS SERVICE

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Catfish Processing Down 5 Percent

Farm-raised catfish processed during March 2005 totaled 57.1 million pounds round weight, down 5 percent from March 2004. The average price paid to producers was 73.3 cents per pound for March 2005, up 0.2 cent from last month and 1.0 cent above a year ago.

Net pounds of processed fish sold during March 2005 totaled 27.5 million pounds, down 5 percent from the comparable month in 2004. Total end of the month inventory increased 5 percent from last month and was up 28 percent from a year ago. Sales of fresh fish, at 10.6 million pounds, were down 13 percent from March 2004 and represented 38 percent of total sales. Frozen fish sales, at 16.9 million pounds, were up 2 percent from a year ago and accounted for the remaining 62 percent of total fish sales. Sales of whole fish represented 17 percent of the total fish sold, fillets accounted for 60 percent, and the remaining 23 percent were mostly steaks, nuggets, and value added products.

The March 2005 average price received by processors for total fresh fish was \$2.30 per pound, an increase of 8 cents from last year. Prices for fresh whole fish were \$1.60 per pound, up 3 cents from last year. Prices for fresh fillets were up 14 cents at \$2.85 per pound. Total frozen fish averaged \$2.35 per pound, up 4 cents from March 2004. Prices for frozen whole fish were up 1 cent at \$1.98, and frozen fillets at \$2.70 per pound were up 3 cents from a year ago.

Freshwater imports of frozen, boneless, *Ictalurus*, *Pangasius* and *Siluriformes* catfish fillets for February 2005 totaled 1.23 million pounds, substantially above last year. Seventy percent of all imports were from Vietnam with the remainder coming from Brazil, Cambodia and China. The *Ictalurus* (channel catfish) imports totaled 285 thousand pounds.

Exports of frozen, boneless catfish fillets reported for February 2005 totaled 68.6 thousand pounds. Of the frozen fillets, 4.53 thousand pounds went to Canada, and the remainder to Germany and Mexico. Fresh fillet exports totaled 82.5 thousand pounds, with 42.0 thousand pounds going to Canada and the rest to Mexico.

Import and export data are compiled by the U.S. Bureau of Census.

**Farm-Raised Catfish: Quantity Processed by Major Processors,
United States, 2004-2005**

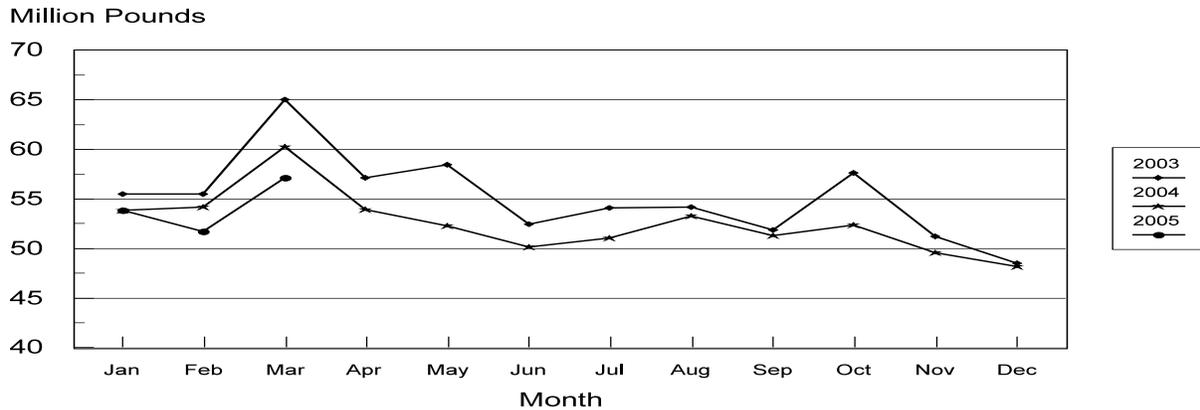
Month	Round Weight Processed					Percent of Previous Year Percent
	Monthly		Percent of Previous Year Percent	Cumulative		
	2004 <i>1,000 Pounds</i>	2005 <i>1,000 Pounds</i>		2004 <i>1,000 Pounds</i>	2005 <i>1,000 Pounds</i>	
Jan	53,849	53,856	100	53,849	53,856	100
Feb	54,173	51,720	95	108,022	105,576	98
Mar	60,272	57,117	95	168,294	162,693	97
Apr	53,896			222,190		
May	52,324			274,514		
Jun	50,155			324,669		
Jul	51,055			375,724		
Aug	53,295			429,019		
Sep	51,329			480,348		
Oct	52,396			532,744		
Nov	49,536			582,280		
Dec	48,170			630,450		

**Farm-Raised Catfish: Prices Paid to Producers by Processors
and Imports, United States, 2004-2005**

Month	Price per Pound ¹		Change from Previous Year Dollars	Imports ²		Percent of Previous Year Percent
	2004	2005		2004	2005	
	<i>Dollars</i>	<i>Dollars</i>		<i>1,000 Pounds</i>	<i>1,000 Pounds</i>	
Jan	0.668	0.725	0.057	215	1,383	643
Feb	0.703	0.731	0.028	204	1,230	603
Mar	0.723	0.733	0.010	295		
Apr	0.728			328		
May	0.720			248		
Jun	0.689			270		
Jul	0.682			123		
Aug	0.683			1,637		
Sep	0.683			1,801		
Oct	0.695			1,104		
Nov	0.689			1,579		
Dec	0.690			1,420		

¹ Price for fish delivered to the processing plant door. Price includes charges for any services provided by the processing plant, such as seining and hauling, but does not include adjustments based on year-end settlements.
² Pounds of frozen boneless fillets. Includes Ictalurus, Pangasius and Siluriformes catfish. Data furnished by U.S. Bureau of Census.

**Catfish Processed
United States 2003-2005**



Catfish Processors: Sales Volume, Average Price, and Ending Inventory, United States, March 2004-2005

Item	Sales Volume		Average Price		Ending Inventory	
	2004	2005	2004	2005	2004	2005
	<i>1,000 Pounds</i>	<i>1,000 Pounds</i>	<i>Dollars per Pound</i>	<i>Dollars per Pound</i>	<i>1,000 Pounds</i>	<i>1,000 Pounds</i>
Fresh Fish						
Whole						
Round & Guttet	1,266	1,085	1.05	1.08	*	*
Whole Dressed	2,542	2,317	1.79	1.81	*	*
Total	3,808	3,402	1.57	1.60	316	183
Other						
Steaks	123	103	2.11	2.15	*	*
Nuggets	1,104	973	1.28	1.30	125	127
Other ¹	340	294	2.95	3.05	*	*
Total	1,567	1,370	1.71	1.74	159	134
Fillets ²	6,815	5,795	2.71	2.85	552	585
Total Fresh	12,190	10,567	2.22	2.30	1,027	902
Frozen Fish						
Whole Dressed	1,302	1,166	1.97	1.98	1,415	1,213
Other						
Steaks	126	133	1.91	1.94	105	97
Nuggets	3,095	3,103	1.09	1.05	2,097	2,176
Other ¹	1,560	1,680	2.63	2.81	775	940
Total	4,781	4,916	1.61	1.68	2,977	3,213
Fillets ²	10,572	10,824	2.67	2.70	5,539	8,654
Total Frozen	16,655	16,906	2.31	2.35	9,931	13,080
Fresh & Frozen Fish						
Whole						
Round & Guttet	1,266	1,085	1.05	1.08	*	*
Whole Dressed	3,844	3,483	1.85	1.87	*	*
Total	5,110	4,568	1.67	1.70	1,731	1,396
Other						
Steaks	249	236	2.01	2.03	*	*
Nuggets	4,199	4,076	1.14	1.11	2,222	2,303
Other ¹	1,900	1,974	2.69	2.85	*	*
Total	6,348	6,286	1.64	1.69	3,136	3,347
Fillets ²	17,387	16,619	2.69	2.75	6,091	9,239
Total Fresh & Frozen	28,845	27,473	2.27	2.33	10,958	13,982

* Not published to avoid disclosure of individual operations.

¹ Includes all products not already reported including weight of breading and added ingredients.

² Includes regular, shank, and strip fillets; excludes any breaded products.

Catfish Processing Estimates

Survey Procedures: Survey data for catfish processing are collected from approximately 21 processors. All participating processors must meet the minimum criteria of having a capacity to process at least 2,000 pounds live weight of catfish per 8-hour shift. The survey is conducted entirely by NASS Headquarter's staff in Washington, D.C. NASS field offices, however, are responsible for keeping Headquarters informed of any new processing operations in their state to ensure that the survey coverage is as complete as possible. Processors are contacted either by mail or telephone. Diligent effort is made to ensure that all operations are accounted for in the estimate.

Estimation Procedures: The "**Catfish Processing**" report refers strictly to farm-raised fish and excludes wild capture fish. Prior to summarization, questionnaires are compared with the previous month's reports for comparable placement of data, reasonable price levels, and reasonable inventory carryover given the sales and processing totals reported. Estimates are made for those processors whose reports are not available in time to be included in the release. These plants are identified by an asterisk on page 5 of this release. Estimates are normally based on the processor's previous report and current conditions. Published totals are a straight summation of the individual reports and estimated data. Price items are weighted by the associated volumes to compute weighted average prices. The published price for total whole fish, however, reflects an adjustment to the round and gutted only price to bring it to an equivalent dressed weight price.

If a plant uses a fiscal accounting system, proration is used to convert reported data to a calendar month basis. Only national level estimates are published due to the limited number of plants involved. Generally, individual items are not published if there are less than three plants reporting, or if any one plant has 60 percent or more of the total.

One unique feature of the "**Catfish Processing**" report is the listing of cooperating processors by name on each month's release. This feature originally was used to solicit industry cooperation in maintaining coverage, but it has continued because of the processors' overall acceptance of this policy.

Import and export data for frozen catfish fillets, which are compiled by the Department of Commerce, are also included in this report.

Reliability: Catfish processing estimates are based on a census of all known active processors and, therefore, have no sampling variability. However, estimates may be subject to errors such as omissions, duplication, and mistakes in reporting, recording, and processing of the data. These errors are minimized through strict quality controls in the edit and summarization process, and a careful review of all reported data for consistency and reasonableness.

Revision Policy: Revisions may be necessary following a review of late reports received from plants. Revisions of less than 2 percent of the existing published levels of any category will normally not be made.