



NEWS RELEASE

VIRGINIA AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

National Agricultural Statistics Service • United States Department of Agriculture

P.O. Box 1659 • Richmond, Virginia 23218-1659 • Phone (804) 771-2493

Internet: nass-va@nass.usda.gov • World Wide Web: <http://www.nass.usda.gov/va>

Contact: Kevin Barnes, Director

Number 13

Released: August 2, 2004

AQUACULTURE INDUSTRY GROSSES OVER \$32.5 MILLION IN 2003

Virginia aquaculture producers grossed over \$32.5 million in sales in 2003. Saltwater species accounted for \$26.5 million dollars of the total aquaculture sales with clams supplying over \$20.3 million dollars in gross sales. Sales of freshwater species totaled over \$6.0 million with trout sales accounting for nearly 21 percent of the freshwater receipts.

Saltwater

Clam production is up 167 percent from 1997. Over 139.8 million mature clams were produced in 2003, representing the largest percent of saltwater gross sales at 76.5%. This large increase in production can be attributed to more producers in the clam industry, new techniques and products, and a higher demand for clams from the eastern shore. The clam industry is expected to increase by 13% in 2004.

Soft-shell crab production is down 52 percent from 1997. Over 241 thousand dozen soft-shell crabs were produced in 2003 accounting for over \$3.3 million in gross sales. The weather along with the cyclical patterns of the blue crab industry were the main reasons production was down from 1997. The soft-shell industry is expected to increase by 5% in 2004.

Oyster production is up 179 percent from 1997. Over 859 thousand mature oysters were produced in 2003, accounting for over \$212 thousand in gross sales. There has been substantial growth within this part of the aquaculture industry and it is expected to increase by an astonishing 201% in 2004.

Freshwater

Trout production in the state decreased by 40 percent from 1997. Production was right at 670,000 lbs. with gross sales over \$1.2 million, and is expected to increase by 12% in 2004.

Catfish and hybrid striped bass represented the smallest percentage of the freshwater industry combining for a 1 percent share of gross sales. Catfish production has declined slightly from 1997 while hybrid striped bass have increased their gross sales by 71 percent.

Sale of all other species grossed over \$4.7 million with tilapia sales being the largest influence in this category. Seventy-eight percent of freshwater sales were from the all other species category, and all other species are expected to increase by 1% in 2004.

* The results are based on a recent study of Virginia's aquaculture industry, conducted by the Virginia Agricultural Statistics Service (VASS). The last study of the industry was conducted by VASS in 1997.

Find agricultural statistics for your county, State, and the Nation at www.usda.gov/nass/

Cooperating with Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services