

First Aquaculture Census Catches nearly \$1 billion in Sales for U.S.

The Nation's first census of aquaculture revealed interesting facts-and confirmed some expectations-about one of agriculture's fastest growing sectors. The 1998 Census of Aquaculture, provides a wide variety of data relating to methods of production, sources of water, sales and sale outlets, cooperative agreements and contracts, sizes of operations based on sales, and aquaculture distributed for restoration or conservation purposes.

Mississippi topped the sales chart, capturing nearly 30 percent of the 978 million dollars of domestic aquaculture produced in 1998. Arkansas, Florida, Maine, and Alabama came in second through fifth, respectively, in sales.

In Wisconsin, 95 farms satisfied the aquaculture farm definition of \$1,000 or more in aquaculture sales per year. Groundwater was used by 58 farms as their source of water while an equal number of farms used on-farm surface water. Ponds were the most common method of production, used by 76 farms, followed by flow through raceways or tanks, used by 36 farms. The least popular method, closed re-circulation tanks, was used by 14 farms.

Wisconsin's aquaculture sales captured \$5.23 million in 1998. Sales of baitfish produced on farms, at \$2.46 million, netted the largest portion of the total. Foodfish sales, at \$2.08 million, followed not far behind. Sport or gamefish raised on farms, at \$265,000 made up most of the remaining aquaculture sales. Ornamental fish, crustaceans, and other animal aquaculture account for the rest of aquacultural products raised on farms and sold.

The most popular baitfish sold by Wisconsin farms was the fathead minnow, accounting for \$1.24 million in sales. Golden shiners sales were \$224,000, and other baitfish combined for sales of \$987,000. Retailers bought almost three-fourths of the baitfish.

Foodfish are farm raised fish sold for food or food/sport. In that category, trout was the most popular fish sold, accounting for \$1.69 million. The largest proportion of the state's trout sales, \$1.48 million, were foodsize meeting the minimum 12 inch length. The most common outlet for foodsize trout was fee-fishing and recreational fishing. Of other foodfish species sold, perch came in second followed by walleyes.

Largemouth bass and bluegills tied for the top species raised and sold as sport or gamefish by Wisconsin producers. They each hooked \$78,000 in sales. Other sport or game fish sold including northern pike, Muskie, small mouth bass, and others, pulled in \$46,000. Nearly half of the sportfish were sold to fee-fishing operations or recreational fishermen to stock private waters.

In 1998, Wisconsin noncommercial producers released or distributed an estimated 35.4 million walleyes for restoration or conservation purposes. Second most numerous released or distributed were salmon at 2.56 million fish. Trout numbers were 7.01 million and other fish, not separated into specie categories, were 1.90 million.

For more information, see the website at:

<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/census97/aquaculture/aquaculture.htm>