

Charles H. Bronson
Commissioner of
Agriculture

Florida Department of
Agriculture and
Consumer Services

Florida Aquaculture

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Division of Aquaculture

Highlights:

- Commissioner Bronson applauds FL aquaculture sales to global markets.
- New Florida Aquaculture auto tag to benefit research.
- Florida Aquaculture Association organizes 20th annual meeting to benefit aquaculturists statewide.

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Florida Aquaculture Sales Total \$95.5 Million in 2003

Florida aquaculture producers reported sales of \$95.5 million during 2003 in a survey conducted for the Division of Aquaculture, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Charles H. Bronson, Commissioner of Agriculture, commented, "This compares favorably to sales of \$99.5 million reported for 2001

and is the third highest volume of sales since the survey was begun in 1988." The largest volume of sales of aquaculture products was \$102 million in 1997.

Commissioner Bronson further noted that "Florida agriculture as a whole, including aquaculture, is challenged by increasing global trade and Florida's aquaculturists are holding their own in this dynamic marketplace." For the first time in the Florida Aquaculture survey, the Department is reporting the number of Florida aquaculturists that sold to other countries: 30 aquafarms sold \$5.3 million worth of Florida grown product to foreign markets. The Department is working to promote Florida aquaculture nationally and

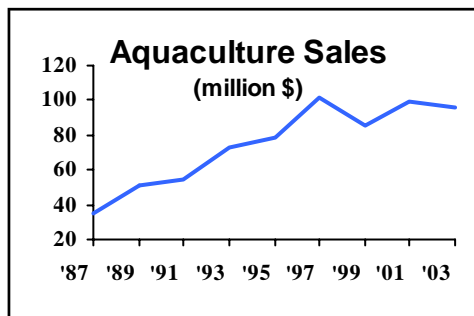
internationally through targeted marketing campaigns and on-going market analysis. These market-related efforts and additional aquaculture

tions in business but which did not sell any product in 2003.

A large percentage of aquaculture operations in Florida are small. Of the 544 operations in 2003, 43.9 percent were less than 3 acres in size. These represent many of the clam producers, who lease 2 acres of water in the Gulf of Mexico or Indian River Lagoon, as well as some of the small tropical fish farms. Another 20.6 percent of the operations used between 3 and 6 acres of land and/or water. Only about 3 percent of the operations used 50 acres or more.

Owners and/or operators of Florida's aquaculture operations provide much of the labor required. Operators reported working an average of 32 hours per week on the farms. A total of 485 persons worked without pay on 233 operations. These are typically family members or partners. There were 316 operations with no hired labor; the other 228 farms hired 928 full-time workers and 731 part-time workers.

The complete Aquaculture statistical report is available on the Internet at <http://www.nass.usda.gov/fl>.



industry information, including the "Florida Aquaculture Plan 2003-04," can be found on the Internet at <http://www.fl-seafood.com/> and <http://www.florida-aquaculture.com/>.

In 2003, sales increased for Tropical Fish, Tilapia, Catfish, Live Rock, and Other Aquatics. Sales decreased for Aquatic Plants, Clams, Oysters, Alligators, Shrimp, and Other Fish.

There were 140 fewer operations in 2003 than in 2001. In 2003, there were 544 operations using 6,450 acres, compared to 684 operations using 7,010 acres in 2001. There were 80 active operations in 2003 without sales, reflecting either new operations which have not yet sold a product or opera-

Oyster Shell to Restore Reefs in Short Supply

Representatives Will Kendrick and Dwight Stansel and Legislative and Governor's Office staff were on board the *R/V Shellfish Mariner* to share in the restoration of public oyster reefs in Apalachicola Bay.

Shell planting on Florida's public oyster reefs was reported as early as 1914, and the State has maintained an effective shell collection and planting program since 1949. Restoring oyster reefs with processed shell, or cultch, provides resource managers with the almost singular opportunity to promote production and contribute direct economic benefit to oyster fishing communities.

From the program's beginning, local oyster processors have contributed more than 8 million bushels of cultch to enhance the productivity of Apalachicola Bay. During this time, the oyster culture program has been supported by state laws that have provided that a percentage of all shells from oysters shucked commercially in Florida shall be the

property of the State.

During fiscal year 2002/03, the Division collected 81,134 bushels of processed oyster shell from



Franklin County processors, showing a significant decrease when compared to the average of 165,000 bushels collected annually from 1990 through 2002. Throughout this period, the shell supply was bolstered by collections of thousands of bushels of calico scallop shell from local processors.

The Division planted 340,368 bushels on public reefs in fiscal year 2002/03, reflecting increased shell planting as part of the St. George Island Bridge Replacement mitigation plan.

Currently, the stockpile of shell has been substantially depleted, as the Division has encountered greater competition for processed shell, and the source of scallop shell has dried up because calico scallop harvesting in Florida's panhandle has diminished. Faced with declining shell collections, it will be very difficult for the Division to continue to meet its goal of planting 250,000 bushels of shell per year.

Oyster resource development has played an important role in sustaining oyster production in Apalachicola Bay over the past half century, and will remain a critical component in sustaining the Bay in the future. To ensure future oyster production, shellfish processors are encouraged to contact Mark Berrigan, 850-488-4033, and contribute cultch to the Division's stockpile. The Division will pick up all contributions in Franklin County at no charge to the contributor.

Cultch collection for Apalachicola Bay oyster bar restoration was less than half of historical amounts: 81,134 bushels versus an average of 165,000 bushels per year

Florida Aquaculture Auto Plate Goes on Sale

The Florida legislature passed, and Governor Jeb Bush signed, a bill creating a **Florida Aquaculture**



specialty license plate. Proceeds from the new plate, which will go on sale

in the fall at all state tag outlets, will support research and education efforts in Harbor Branch Oceanographic's Aquaculture Division. The plate was designed by

world-renowned marine life artist Guy Harvey, whose distinctive artwork and name recognition played a significant role in gaining its acceptance. The plate features a clownfish, the extremely popular saltwater aquarium fish now farm-raised successfully as a result of Harbor Branch research.

The **Florida Aquaculture** plate was made possible by the hard work and support of several legislative sponsors, including House of

Representatives sponsor Rep. Gayle Harrell (District 81), House co-sponsor Rep. Richard Machek (District 78) and Senate sponsor Sen. Charlie Clary, (District 4). Senator Ken Pruitt (District 28) also provided invaluable guidance and leadership. Many thanks also to the Florida Aquaculture Association for their support.

Contact Dr. Megan Davis for more information at 772-465-2400 extension 298 or MDavis@HBOI.edu.

FAA Holds 20th Annual Meeting in Tampa

The Florida Aquaculture Association (FAA) will hold its 20th annual meeting at the Hillsborough Community College, Ybor City Campus, Tampa.

Presentations on Saturday, November 6th, will cover state regulations, marketing, research, technical innovations, and crop insurance. The day will begin at 8:30 AM with a welcome by the conference chair, Carlos Martinez and FAA

President, Marty Tanner. From 8:00 AM to 10:00 PM presentations by Mike Salaro, Sherman Wilhelm and Joanne McNeely will encompass Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services regulatory and marketing programs. From 10:30 AM to 12:30 PM, Dr. Megan Davis will chair a "Research for Industry" session with reports by Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute, Mote Marine, University of Florida,

and University of Miami. From 1:30 PM to 4:30 PM Carlos Martinez will chair a "Education for Industry" session with reports on the newest equipment and technology pertinent to fish, mollusc, and crustacean culture and overviews on new technology, equipment and crop insurance.

For registration and location information call FAA at 863-293-5710 or visit

Division Deploys High Tech Equipment

The Division of Aquaculture is field testing new equipment that measures nutrients in the water column and current speed and direction. Deployment of a nutrient analyzer, EcoLAB, and an acoustic doppler current profiler (ADCP) into waterways



EcoLAB is a self-contained nutrient analytical unit that works on-

The EcoLAB is a fourth generation chemical analyzer, and has the capability of measuring the following chemistries: phosphate, nitrate (& nitrite), silicate, and a newly developed fluorometric ammonia technique. As nutrient

levels have been a focus lately of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, changing rules concerning aquaculture effluents and the continued work by the Department of Environmental Protection to establish Total Maximum Daily Load levels for water bodies, the Division is having to spend more time on nutrient levels.

Two members of our staff, Kal Knickerbocker and Lela Buttery, took an intensive course, provided by Ocean Marine Institute, on the assembly, mechanisms, and language (EcoScript) of the instrument. Water samples will be tested by the EcoLAB *in situ* and verified by the University of Florida using conventional laboratory methods. Water sample results will be compared to check EcoLAB accuracy.

The ADCP measures water velocity, speed, and direction within the water column. This instrument will be used to help determine current patterns and how those patterns change during tidal cycles.

This project is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and will continue for one year. For further information, contact Lela Buttery, 850-488-4033, or butterl@doacs.state.fl.us.

Mark your calendars to attend the 20th FAA Annual Meeting in Ybor City on November 6th.

USDA Grant to Improve Weather Prediction

A Southeast Climate Consortium of six southeastern U.S. universities have received \$2.9 million by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to conduct weather research to create long

term weather predictions. The predictions are developed specifically to benefit agricultural products to prevent crop losses and improve productivity.

Information and analysis are on the web at: <http://www.agclimate.org>.



CHARLES H. BRONSON
Commissioner of Agriculture

Florida Department of
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Consumer Services

We're on the Web!
www.FloridaAquaculture.com



Legislators and legislative and Governor's Office staff operate powerful water jets to distribute oyster shell on State maintained

The Division of Aquaculture's responsibilities include certifying all legitimate aquaculturists through an annual registration, implementing on-farm Aquaculture Best Management Practices to meet the State of Florida's environmental goals, managing 1.4 million acres of coastal waters for the harvest or culture of wholesome shellfish, implementing the National Shellfish Sanitation Program through periodic inspection of shellfish processing plants and product, and managing submerged sovereign land leases for aquacultural purposes.



Additional information about Florida aquaculture or Division programs can be obtained from the following offices.

Apalachicola Shellfish Center:	850-653-8317
Bartow Field Office:	863-519-8459
Cedar Key Field Lab:	352-543-5181
Murdock Field Lab:	941-255-7405
Palm Bay Field Lab:	321-984-4890
Panama City Field Lab:	850-236-2200
Tallahassee Office:	850-488-4033 or 488-5471

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