



*For immediate release*

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## **U.S. Aquaculture\* and Food Safety**

U.S. aquaculture production is overseen by a number of federal agencies including the Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Department of the Interior, and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Federal programs are supplemented by extensive state and local programs. Each of these agencies and programs has a food safety component.

The Food and Drug Administration operates a mandatory Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) program for seafood products. The HACCP program is a proactive system based on identifying and preventing hazards that could cause foodborne illnesses rather than a conventional reactive system relying on spot checks. HACCP requires that a food establishment analyzes its production methods in a rational, scientific manner in order to identify critical control points, establish critical limits, and monitoring procedures. The principles of HACCP were pioneered by the Pillsbury Company in cooperation with NASA to help ensure that food for the United States space program approached a 100% safety level. In 1997, the FDA initiated a HACCP program for seafood to increase the margin of safety and reduce seafood related illnesses to the lowest possible levels.

HACCP has several additional benefits over conventional inspection systems. It clearly recognizes the food establishment as the final party responsible for food safety and allows the regulatory agency to more precisely determine the food establishment's level of compliance over time. HACCP records kept by the food establishment may be reviewed at any time while traditional inspection systems can only determine conditions at the time of inspection and produce a "snapshot" of compliance. The federal program is supplemented by state and local licensing programs. Those programs rely heavily on the implementation of HACCP principles and physical inspection.

In addition to the mandatory FDA HACCP program, farm-raised oysters, clams, and mussels are closely monitored by the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference (ISSC). State agencies, in cooperation with the FDA, administer a certification program requiring wholesale shellfish dealers to harvest, handle, process, and ship shellfish under sanitary conditions and maintain records verifying that the shellfish were harvested from approved waters. State agencies regularly test shellfish growing waters to help ensure that the shellfish harvested from those waters are safe, inspect shellfish handling and shipping facilities, and routinely collect samples of shellfish for thorough testing. The FDA publishes a monthly listing of certified interstate shellfish shippers.

(more)

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In addition to the mandatory programs, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) offers a voluntary fee for service program. This program provides sanitary inspection, facility, and process audits. Product quality evaluation, grading, and certification are also available. Certain products may be eligible for stamping with official marks such as the U.S. Grade A, Lot Inspection, or Processed Under Federal Inspection (PUFI).

All of these programs help to ensure that U.S. farm-raised fish and shellfish are safe and should be a regular part of a healthy diet. If you would like to know more about U.S. farm-raised seafood, please visit us at [www.thenaa.net](http://www.thenaa.net) .

*\*Aquaculture or fish farming is the production of marine and freshwater organisms under controlled conditions.*

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