



WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

Notable Needs for Seafood Trade Task Force

Executive Order on Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth

Objective 1: Improve access to foreign markets through trade policy and negotiations

Re-negotiations of the Compact of Free Association Should Include Stipulations for Supporting Mutual Fisheries Interests within International Commissions

The Compact of Free Association (COFA) provides at least ~\$150 Million annually to the former Trust Territories in the Pacific (Republic of Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia). The long term goal of United States' COFA support is to assist Pacific Island nations "in their efforts to advance the economic self-sufficiency of their peoples." The funding provided over the past two decades provided the basis for meeting the two primary political goals of the compact, to (1) secure self-government for each country by ending the four decades-old Trusteeship; and (2) ensure national security rights for the United States in the freely associated states. US fisheries maintain a critical economic and security conduit for the US in the Pacific Islands, yet these same nations that benefit from US aid often openly conflict with US interests in international fisheries commissions and align themselves with parochial interests of other island nations which are heavily influenced by other industrialized nations that directly compete with the US (such as China). COFA re-negotiations need to include stipulations for strengthening cooperation with US fishery interests.

Accountability for Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fisheries; Reduce Transshipped Products Entering in US Markets

Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fisheries (IUU) are often synonymous with the most egregious at-sea violations on human rights and transgressions against international regulations for conservation. Products from many of these fisheries still find their way into the US seafood markets. The US needs to halt any supply of IUU fishery products and hold suspected flag states accountable through any means necessary. Furthermore, transshipment is another means for which internationally non-compliant fishing vessels can move fishery products into markets while offloading at-sea and 'mask' any deficiencies in sustainable practices. US longline fisheries do not transship any tuna or tuna-like products. There is a need to reduce transshipped products from entering US markets that may be unfairly competing with domestic products.

Objective 2: Resolve technical barriers to U.S. seafood exports

Provide Exemption for US Pacific Island Fishermen to the Billfish Conservation Act

In 2012, the 112th Congress passed the Billfish Conservation Act (Act) to "address the global population decline of billfish" and "to protect the economic benefits to the US economy of

recreational fishing and marine commerce and the traditional cultural fisheries.” In the Act, Section 4 prohibits the sale of billfish, but part (c) provided exemptions for traditional fisheries and markets. This exemption applies to billfish caught by US fishing vessels and landed in the Hawaii and the Pacific Insular Areas (American Samoa, Guam, and CNMI). In 2018, these exemptions were taken away, precluding US fishermen in the Pacific from selling products elsewhere in the US and from exporting billfish products to foreign countries. The amended BCA impeded the ability for US fishermen to reduce the ‘seafood trade deficit’. Billfish stocks in the Pacific, except North Pacific striped marlin, are not overfished nor experiencing overfishing and could support sustainable utilization and economic value to the fishery. Removing the ability to market sustainably caught fish outside of the Pacific Islands negatively impacts the US fishermen and fishing industry. The needed exemption in the Pacific would allow for the sale of over half a million pounds of billfish annually with an estimated value of up to \$2.5 million.

Objective 3: Support fair market access for U.S. seafood products.

Improved Seafood Traceability and Country of Origin Labeling on Restaurant Menus Nationwide

The American public is becoming more and more aware of the virtues of wild-caught US domestic seafood, particularly those that are sustainably harvested. There is no shortage of outreach and education on domestic wild caught seafood, so that informed consumers are educated enough to know domestic products are ideal for them to purchase at the marketplace. Unfortunately, we don't have a mandate that will require restaurants to tell consumers from where their seafood is sourced. Labeling of product origin needs to improve so American consumers can make informed decisions on where the bulk of seafood consumption takes place - which is typically in restaurants. Tracing product origins allows consumer prerogative to drive the US seafood market based on informed decisions based on factors such as sustainability, food safety, or even human rights.

NOAA FishWatch Should Serve as Equivalent to Third-Party Certification of Fishery Sustainability through Product Labeling

Many imported seafood products may be subjected to 'green-washing' by fee-for-service assessments and resultant certification from third-party organizations. This may mislead consumers to believe the certified products are more sustainable than equivalent US fishery products managed under the auspices of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA). The NOAA FishWatch program should act as the highest standard for sustainability certification when fishery products are deemed sustainable under science-based management criteria in the MSA. This initiative will require public outreach for NOAA FishWatch 'brand recognition' and allow the use of NOAA FishWatch on product labeling. Furthermore, large US retailers have adopted third-party seafood sustainability certification and/or rating systems to support the continued domination of the US market by imported seafood. This ignores the performance of NOAA Fisheries and the Regional Councils as the competent authorities on the sustainability of federally-managed US domestic fisheries. "Buy American" initiatives should include NOAA Fisheries outreach efforts directed to retailers to explain the source of sustainability of wild-

caught US seafood products, NOAA Fisheries, the Regional Councils, and the MSA. As a result, the unnecessary cost of third party certifications would be eliminated for US fisheries and help make domestic seafood more competitive in the US market.

Increased Testing of Imported Seafood to Ensure the Imports Meet FDA Standards

The use of chemical additives is prevalent in imported seafood (especially shrimp and other shellfish) to embellish product quality. Many of these additives may contain banned chemical substances or substances that could cause health concerns. Chemically-treated products are often cheaper than domestic products and can often supplant US products in restaurants and markets. Origins of products with a propensity to use chemical treatments in seafood should be noted.

Do Not Close Any More Domestic Areas to Fishing and Consider Re-Opening Closed Areas

The US has closed millions of nautical miles of fishing grounds in its sovereign economic exclusive zones which precludes production of US seafood to compete with foreign harvested products. Many of these closures were done under the auspices of the Antiquities Act and not through instruments that require scientific justification, objectives, and evaluation (such as the MSA). Such closures create an undue burden on domestic seafood production while foreign sources are not subjected to the same management vigor as US fisheries.

Capacity-Building and Support of Young Fishermen Development Programs

The average age of participants in US domestic fisheries is increasing while the ability to supply domestic labor in domestic fisheries for the future is waning. This is not only creating a loss of cultural identity for many coastal areas, but also creates labor issues in supplying domestic seafood to the US market. Like with trade/vocational programs for young people in the US promoting industrial skills or agriculture, fisheries should be included as an encouraged career path. Lack of US participation in international or HMS fisheries will reduce the US footprint providing reliable data for HMS management and will diminish the US role in international fisheries management.

Put Domestic Seafood on Lunch Menus in Public Schools

US domestic seafood products are more inclined to have a lesser economic footprint than land-based protein sources. Seafood also tends to have balanced levels of macronutrients and are naturally fortified with vitamins and minerals essential for growth and development. Seafood products are often cheaper than land-sourced meat products. Balanced diets consisting of seafood not only promote healthy lifestyles for generations, but they also increase the demand of domestic seafood over foreign products and less healthy land-sourced meat.