

**Mississippi Chapter of the American Fisheries Society
RESOLUTION ON THE SALE OF FARM-RAISED
LARGEMOUTH BASS AND OTHER CULTURED SPORT FISH
SPECIES AS FOOD FISH**

Adopted 12 September 2014

WHEREAS, Mississippi is the leading Catfish aquaculture producer in the USA, with more than 41,000 water surface acres used for production (NASS 2014a) and;

WHEREAS, Catfish aquaculture farms in Mississippi and the region are declining in acreage and production (NASS 2014b) due to variety of factors, including high feed prices and competition from overseas, and;

WHEREAS, food fish markets exist for farm-raised sport fish species, including Largemouth Bass, which can be produced using the existing Catfish infrastructure, and;

WHEREAS, under the Lacey Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 3371–3378), it is unlawful to import, export, transport, sell, receive, acquire, or purchase fish, wildlife or plants that are taken, possessed, transported, or sold in violation of state, federal, tribal, or foreign laws that relate to fish and wildlife and;

WHEREAS, the Lacey Act applies to all “wild” animals, including fish, regardless of whether they have been “bred, hatched, or born in captivity” such as farm-raised fish species (Rumley 2012) and;

WHEREAS, the State of Mississippi does not currently permit the sale, either in-state or via exportation, of sport fish including Largemouth Bass for the purpose of human consumption and;

WHEREAS, as of 2013, at least 32 states allowed importation and sale of farm-raised Largemouth Bass to food fish markets within their states with either no restrictions, or with restrictions that included at least one of the following (*unpublished report, P. Zajicek, Division of Aquaculture, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services*):

- Prohibition of importation of native sport fish species for consumption,
- Permit required to transport live Largemouth Bass into the state,
- Importations must comply with Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS) requirements if imported from Great Lake states,
- Health certification of imports required,
- Must sell to an in-state licensed fish dealer or facility,
- Imported fish must be accompanied by paperwork of origin (proving it is a farm-raised product),
- Source facility must not have wild-caught fish on site,
- Must prevent escape and;

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WHEREAS, Florida's Aquaculture Review Council and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission recently identified three regulatory concerns with the sale of farm raised Largemouth Bass for human consumption (FDACS 2014):

1. Need for certification that Largemouth Bass are farm-raised,
2. Potential genetic contamination via release of farm-raised fish,
3. Potential for transmission of Largemouth Bass Virus (LMBV) via infected farm-raised Largemouth Bass to uninfected populations and;

WHEREAS, there is growing pressure from the aquaculture industry in Mississippi to modify State law to allow the sale of sport fish species, particularly Largemouth Bass, as a food fish within Mississippi and across state lines;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that if the State of Mississippi decides to allow the sale of farm-raised sport fish species as food fish, the Mississippi Chapter of the American Fisheries Society urges State legislators and regulatory agencies to put in place the following safeguards and restrictions to prevent abuses and unintended consequences, such as illegal sale of wild-caught fish, the release of live fish to the wild, and the spread of fish pathogens:

1. *Product identification*: Require annual registration for fish producers which provides that a unique ID number be placed on all associated paperwork to ensure only licensed fish producers with acceptable culture and fish health practices are legally participating in the sport fish for human consumption program.
2. *Farm-raised certification*: A rigorous and thorough testing and certification program needs to be implemented to prevent the capture and sale of wild-caught fish. Certificate of farm-raised status should accompany any fish to be transported within Mississippi or across state lines. There are simple tests for linoleic acid and other fatty acids which act as signatures for fish cultured on pelletized feeds. These tests have been used successfully with largemouth bass (Tritt et al. 2005) and other species (e.g., Jahncke et al. 1989; Seaborn et al. 2000) to verify that specimens are farm-raised and not wild-caught.
3. *Health certification*: Require periodic inspection and certification of aquaculture facilities, broodstock, and live-shipped fish by a fish-health specialist to prevent spread of fish parasites and diseases, especially Largemouth Bass Virus (LMBV). Certificate of health should accompany any farm-raised sport fish intended for human consumption transported within Mississippi or across state lines.
4. *Recipient affidavit*: Require that when fish are being transported out-of-state, the recipient should sign a detailed receipt that includes a statement that the fish are intended solely for human consumption and that such fish must be maintained in holding facilities prior to final sale or use. No release of sport fish into the wild is permitted.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the transport of live fish across state lines should be avoided whenever possible, and that the preferred practice for sale of sport fish to out of state food fish markets should be that of fish euthanized and processed within Mississippi and shipped on ice or frozen across state lines.

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**Literature Citations for the
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RESOLUTION ON THE SALE OF FARM-RAISED LARGEMOUTH BASS
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