

# Southeast Shrimp Strategy and Planning Meeting Summary Report

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# Southeast Shrimp Strategy and Planning Meeting

- Hosted by TX, LA, and GA Sea Grant programs and GSMFC, supported by rapid response funding from the National Sea Grant Office
- Responding to the urgency of industry requests for assistance and a call for support prior to 2024 shrimp season
- Held in Baton Rouge, LA on April 30 – May 1, 2024 (1.5-day workshop)
- **PURPOSE:** to bring regional stakeholders (industry, researchers and resource managers) from both Gulf and South Atlantic together to address the pressing challenges currently facing the shrimp industry (economic hardships, market dynamics, regulatory issues and sustainability concerns)





# Participants (61)

- **Southeast Region:** representation was present for all eight warm-water shrimp harvesting states in Southeast from Texas through North Carolina
- **Industry:** harvesters, docks, processors, industry association representatives
- **Seafood Buyers (market):** restaurant, catering, food service, and retail representatives
- **State and federal agencies:** TPWD, LDWF, MDMR, ADCNR, GSMFC, GMFMC, NOAA Fisheries, USDA, EDA, and LA Office of Homeland Security
- **Sea Grant:** TX, LA and GA representatives

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# Background

- Economic challenges for the Southeast Shrimp Fishery reached a new height in 2023 causing most shrimp vessels to remain tied up for part, or all, of the season due to extremely low shrimp price (2023 ex-vessel prices falling to 50-60% of 2021 dockside prices and continues to drop) and increasing operation costs- particularly fuel expenses, which has put the future of this industry in jeopardy.
- The flood of imported shrimp, exceeding US shrimp consumption, combined with previous season's domestic shrimp, and coupled with infrastructure losses (hurricanes, buyouts) has led to a backlog of product at frozen storage facilities, causing a stall out in the market.
- Gulf and South Atlantic shrimp fleets in multiple states requested disaster declarations and have approached multiple agencies and legislators seeking assistance but there has not been a clear path for relief or coordinated strategy to address the current challenges.

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# Meeting Goals

## GOALS:

- 1) Create a neutral platform (Sea Grant and GSMFC hosts) for engaging management agencies and various sectors of the industry together to address current challenges (economic hardships, market dynamics, regulatory issues and sustainability concerns)
- 2) Identify the specific agency offices that may play a role in various recovery efforts
- 3) identify policy changes that industry would need to work on to allow shrimp to be included in some possible solutions
- 4) assist industry in developing strategies for recovery

# Meeting Outline- Day 1

**Day 1** focused on a comprehensive overview of the challenges and opportunities facing the Southeast Shrimp Industry. Presentations and panels covered the following topics:

- Industry perspective (Gary Graham):
  - Current state of Industry- *why this time is different from past*
- USDA Lessons learned for seafood under USDA
  - review of the move of catfish under USDA management
- USDA Risk Management programs
  - crop insurance, revenue protection programs
- Shrimp buyers panel: market dynamics and strategies
  - disconnect between end market and vessels/docks- need for supply chain mapping, consumer education
- NOAA initiatives
  - Seafood Strategy and the Shrimp Futures Project
- Legal and policy updates (LA Sea Grant Law Program)-
  - review of current proposed legislation relating to shrimp
- USDA food assistance programs
  - farm to school and food banks



# Meeting Outline- Day 2

**Day 2** focused on **collaborative breakout sessions** where participants **prioritized** the **key challenges**, potential **solutions** and **envisioning a successful shrimp** industry future.



***Breakout Session 1** What **hurdles, stressors, limiting factors** are we missing? What topics do you want more information about?*

***Breakout Session 2** What does **success** look like for the industry/your business? Where is the product ending up in the market?*

***Breakout Session 3** What **education or marketing** is needed (possible audiences: consumers, retailers, chefs/restaurants, industry, new markets? Quality/handling?) Who can do it?*

***Breakout Session 4** What **policies** do they want to see implemented (state and/or federal)? Who is needed to make that happen?*

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# Key Challenges Prioritized

- **Imports:** Unfair competition from imported shrimp due to lax regulations (environmental, health and safety), labeling inconsistencies, forced labor and potential subsidies.
- **Consumer Awareness/Marketing:** Lack of consumer education regarding the benefits of domestic wild-caught shrimp.
- **Funding and Infrastructure:** Limited access to capital for equipment upgrades, infrastructure improvements and disaster relief.
- **Workforce Development:** Difficulty attracting and retaining skilled workers due to low wages, demanding work conditions and lack of training programs.
- **Regulation and Policy:** Complex and sometimes contradictory regulations hindering industry operations and increasing costs.

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# Action Items Identified

- **Consumer Awareness/Marketing and Education:**

- Develop a **national brand** identity for domestic shrimp.
- Conduct **economic analyses** for market and supply chain for the shrimp industry.
- Launch **consumer education campaigns** highlighting the sustainability, quality and taste of domestic shrimp.
- **Partner with schools and culinary programs** to promote domestic shrimp consumption.
- Educate the industry on **quality best practices** and create workforce training programs.

- **Workforce Development:**

- Invest in training programs to improve skills and attract new generations of workers to the industry.
- Address challenges related to substance abuse and mental health within the workforce.

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# Action Items Identified- cont.

- **Policy and Advocacy:**

- Push for **stricter labeling requirements** for imported shrimp, including country-of-origin labeling and menu labeling for restaurants.
- Advocate for **increased inspections of imported shrimp** to ensure safety and compliance with regulations.
- Lobby for policies that support domestic **shrimp purchases by government programs** and institutions.
- Work with agencies like NOAA and USDA to **streamline disaster relief programs** and access to funding.
- Advocate for the inclusion of shrimp in the Farm Bill to increase industry support.

- **Industry Collaboration:**

- Maintain a **collaborative industry group** to share information, advocate for policy changes, and develop solutions.
- Encourage **collaboration between different sectors** of the shrimp industry (shrimpers, processors, retailers) to strengthen the supply chain.



# Additional Considerations

- **Supply chain mapping and transparency:** There is a need for analysis and communication surrounding shrimp's path from boat to plate and costs associated at each level.
- Investigate **opportunities for funding** through existing programs (SK Grants, loan programs) and potential new initiatives (USDA Regional Food Business Centers).
- Explore the **feasibility of USDA crop insurance** for the shrimp industry.
- Identify solutions for overcoming **limitations in public-private partnerships for infrastructure development.**

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# Next Steps

- Participants are encouraged to share meeting summaries with local groups and state representatives.
    - *report has been shared with some state and federal representatives and utilized for meetings-*
      - *Texas Legislature Culture, Recreation and Tourism Committee Hearing on 'Support for Coastal Shrimping and Fishing Industries'*
      - *Recent hearing for the Bipartisan American Seafood Caucus in DC*
  - Partners will develop and implement action plans based on the identified priorities.
    - *Sea Grant is setting up a Resources webpage to maintain up-to-date resources and materials for the industry and will continue to host topical meetings (virtually) on specific items as requested by industry.*
    - *Follow up meetings are occurring with USDA to further investigate inclusion of shrimp in USDA programs- crop insurance, purchases, school lunch programs, etc.*
    - *Work with State Marketing programs on marketing and consumer awareness campaigns (TX Go Texan new marketing campaign- "Caught here, not brought here")*
  - Continued communication and collaboration are essential for achieving positive outcomes for the domestic shrimp industry.
    - *encouraged participation in the upcoming Shrimp Futures project*
    - *continue to seek opportunities to facilitate neutral platforms for stakeholders to interact across sectors*
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QUESTIONS???



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