



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

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Dr. Michael Rubino
NOAA Fisheries
1315 East West Hwy, Bldg. SSMC3
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3282

Dear Dr. Rubino:

Thank you for your recent presentation to the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council regarding NOAA's Draft National Seafood Strategy. We appreciate that the strategy recognizes the role of the U.S. seafood industry in meeting domestic nutritional needs, and we strongly support the agency's efforts to develop U.S. seafood markets and "put more U.S. seafood back on U.S. plates."

As you move forward with development of an implementation plan, we encourage you to explore opportunities to align the National Seafood Strategy with the Biden Administration's [National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health](#). The strategy, which calls for a whole-of-government approach to end hunger and increase healthy eating and physical activity by 2030, is organized around five pillars:

- Improving food access and affordability
- Integrating nutrition and health.
- Empowering all consumers to make and have access to healthy choices.
- Supporting physical activity for all.
- Enhancing nutrition and food security research.

The Council believes that U.S. seafood should be an integral component of national efforts to address hunger and nutrition. As you are aware, U.S. seafood is a highly nutritious and sustainable food source that provides numerous health benefits. Unfortunately, consumption in the United States remains low, with only 1 in 5 Americans consuming the recommended amount of seafood each week. Additionally, more than 70% of seafood consumed in the U.S. is imported from other countries, and about half of our wild catch is exported to overseas markets.

There is a clear alignment between the goals of the National Seafood Strategy and the National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. We recommend that NOAA work closely with its federal partners, including the USDA and FDA, to develop specific, actionable strategies to increase the presence of U.S. seafood in federal health and nutrition programs, increase consumption of U.S. seafood, and promote awareness of the benefits of seafood consumption. The Council offers the following suggestions for your consideration:

- Collaborate with the USDA to increase the use of U.S. seafood in federal nutrition assistance programs, including the National School Lunch Program

- Strengthen interagency cooperation to simplify and streamline supply chains, thereby increasing traceability and promoting a more direct relationship between harvesters and consumers
- Continue to develop messaging in a variety of formats to educate consumers on the health benefits of seafood, the sustainability of U.S. fisheries, how to access seafood affordably, how to prepare and store seafood safely, etc.
- Collaborate with industry and non-profit organizations to expand the utilization of U.S. seafood via food assistance programs (e.g., food banks)

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. We welcome the opportunity to provide further input on future implementation plans.

Sincerely,

Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D.
Executive Director