

# VISION 2020: The Future of U.S. Marine Fisheries

## Vision 2020: The Future of U.S. Marine Fisheries

is a 28-page report developed by the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC<sup>1</sup>) to assess and address trends affecting the long-term stewardship of living marine resources. This summary of the full report includes key findings and lists the 24 specific recommendations to help create a future with healthy, sustainable fish populations; a robust fishing and marine offshore aquaculture industry; ample recreational fishing opportunities; numerous, vibrant coastal fishing communities; and a safe and healthy seafood supply for the nation.

Marine fisheries have been, are, and will continue to be important to our Nation as a source of food, in providing employment and recreational opportunities, and serving a key role in our ocean ecosystems. With the largest exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in the world (34 million square nautical miles), the United States manages in excess of 900 individual fish stocks (stocks) and other living marine resources. The combined value of US recreational and commercial fishing industries annually generates about \$185 billion in sales and supports over two million jobs.



Besides fishing, marine fish populations are affected by habitat availability, water quality, climate change and other competing uses of our natural resources. Seafood demand and consumption have greatly

risen during the past 35 years and can be expected to continue. Together, these drivers add pressure on sustaining ecosystems and fish abundance. While global wild-caught fisheries production has peaked at approximately 93 million tons per year, rebuilding overfished US stocks through proper management can result in higher production from US capture fisheries. However, sustainable US aquaculture is needed to close the gap in seafood supply and ensure US food security and economic growth.

<sup>1</sup> The Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) was established in 1970 to advise the Secretary of Commerce on all living marine resource matters under the purview of the Department of Commerce. MAFAC members evaluate and assess national programs, recommend priorities, and provide their views on future policy directions. MAFAC members have expertise in commercial and recreational fishing, aquaculture, seafood processing, seafood marketing and sales, consumer interests, coastal communities, and environmental advocacy.

## Four Recurring Themes

The 24 recommendations respond to four over-arching themes that affect the future of marine fisheries in the U.S. These themes are:

### More timely and higher quality data are necessary for critical management decisions.

Although NOAA has a tremendous capacity for conducting high quality scientific research and collecting data and information, current investment in data is disproportionately low relative to societal value of marine resources under NOAA stewardship.



### There are wide-spread opportunities to develop and adopt technology to achieve the outcomes desired for 2020.

Solving many issues such as reducing bycatch, improving aquaculture feeds and production, and resolving important observation, research and monitoring needs will increasingly rely on new technologies and engineered innovations.

### Achieving the Nation's ocean policy goals in 2020 can only result from collaboration and partnerships across all levels of government, sectors, and disciplines.

The ecological, social, and security interests of present and future generations must be equally considered through a vigorous exchange of science, engineering, technology and policy expertise both domestically and internationally.



**Additional fiscal resources required to obtain these predicted benefits are a sound investment.** By sustaining healthy stocks and rebuilding and recovering others, marine fisheries and aquaculture can grow in economic importance for coastal communities and the nation. The return on investment for additional funding is high and readily supports a business case for significantly increasing our nation's stewardship investment to ensure a safe food supply, sustainable use of our environment, and economic and community stability in 2020.



## Recommendations

The 24 specific recommendations are summarized below in five categories:

### Demand, Supply, and Quality of Seafood Products

1. Educate consumers about the health benefits of seafood along with conservation concerns.
2. Strengthen seafood safety programs.
3. Support free trade policies for seafood.
4. Improve NOAA enforcement and establish NOAA as an unequivocal source of unbiased, peer-reviewed scientific information.

### Commercial Fisheries

5. Achieve and maintain sustainable levels of stocks.
6. Match fleet capacity with sustainable harvests.
7. Use limited access privilege programs where appropriate for commercial and recreational sectors.
8. Seek ways to integrate aquaculture production and wild stock to maximize the value of domestic seafood production.
9. Work with coastal communities to ensure infrastructure needs are met.



### Recreational Fisheries

10. Achieve and maintain sustainable levels of stocks important to recreational fisheries.
11. Prohibit sale of recreationally-caught fish and implement and use a recreational registry.
12. Incorporate quota transfers between recreational and commercial sectors where appropriate.
13. Enhance a conservation ethic in all fishery user groups.



### Aquaculture

14. Develop a significant, environmentally sound domestic aquaculture industry to produce safe, healthy seafood; rebuild stocks; and provide jobs in coastal communities.
15. Pass and implement national offshore aquaculture legislation.
16. Financially and technically support aquaculture similar to that available to U.S. agriculture.
17. Ensure comprehensive monitoring of offshore aquaculture sites to help safeguard wild stocks.



### Fisheries Management

18. Protect ocean and coastal habitat.
19. Expand use of ecosystem-based management.
20. Maintain and enhance cross-agency cooperative management among states, regional authorities and federal managers.
21. Enhance accessibility to stock status and catch data for all stakeholders to support informed management decisions.
22. Develop uniform data collection methods to include subsistence fishing in total catch calculations.
23. Show strong leadership at international forums to better manage stocks beyond countries' EEZs.
24. Eliminate illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing and bar IUU fish products from entering global markets.