Dear Friends:

As the catfish industry continues to rebound, 2017 saw an increase in sales and production. Supply of U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish, for the first time since 2013, was available to meet demand. Now the industry must work to increase sales and regain markets lost. By working to produce the product that the market demands while searching for ways to expand the product mix, sustainable growth can be achieved.

In the past, TCI has been successful in obtaining relief through USDA’s various purchasing programs. To better communicate the needs of our farmers, TCI and CFA led a joint industry tour for USDA-AMS leadership this fall. In addition, as a result of these meetings, processors are now working to develop new and expanded product offerings to better compete within the revised USDA Buy American initiative.

The Catfish Institute is aggressively working to increase demand for our products, embarking on a comprehensive advertising campaign to connect our region’s catfish growers to the end consumer. This was accomplished in a number of ways—perhaps most significantly through the new “Catfish is Life” video project, where catfish farmers and their families are highlighted in a series of passionate, and completely non-scripted, videos.

Television media played an increasingly important role this year, as the Alabama, Arkansas and Mississippi Catfish Farmers of the Year were featured in 30-second TV commercials, as well as on social media, radio and outdoor billboards. These farmers also represented our industry in Boston at Seafood Expo North America. We thank them for the role they play to help drive demand for our industry.

As you read this annual report, you will get a detailed glimpse of TCI’s promotional campaigns conducted throughout 2017. The Catfish Institute greatly appreciates its member feed mills and farmers for their support. A very special thank you goes to the entire Board of Directors for their time sacrificed in providing leadership and guidance.

Harry Simmons, Jr.
Chairman, The Catfish Institute

Roger E. Barlow
President, The Catfish Institute
The Catfish Institute Member Feed Mills

Alabama Catfish Feed Mill, LLC
Uniontown, Alabama

Delta Western
Indianola, Mississippi

Fishbelt Feeds
Moorhead, Mississippi

Top Water
Wisner, Louisiana

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Alabama Catfish
Feed Mill, LLC

Jim Tackett
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John Williamson
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Butch Wilson
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www.UScatfish.com
In 2017, The Catfish Institute began its fourth decade of advertising and promotional programs in support of the U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish industry. Through the pages of this report, we will offer a glimpse into the details of the many campaigns undertaken over the past year. We hope you will agree that our marketing programs remain innovative and successful, and are worthy of your continued support.

**Catfish is Life**

A new video project, known affectionately as “Catfish is Life,” was developed and produced by TCI this year. This video series is part of a multi-year project to provide consumers a behind the scenes look at where their catfish comes from—and the farms, families and communities responsible.

A total of 17 videos were completed by year’s end. All of them were honest, heartfelt and completely unscripted. They are timeless works of art, and we could not be prouder of our efforts. To view them, simply log on to our website, UScatfish.com.

The videos are hosted on our YouTube account, which allows them to be easily shared online. In fact, they were a major component of our 2017 social media campaign, and they will continue to be used for many years. Moreover, as new videos are produced and added, we are building a living history of our industry, showcasing farmers young and old as they live out their catfish farming lives.

As you watch the videos, we hope you will say of word of thanks to those farmers who were involved in this important undertaking.

**Sports Marketing**

In 2014, The Catfish Institute launched the industry’s first major sports marketing campaign with television advertising on the newly founded SEC Network. Since that time, opportunities and options for growing our presence in this category have abounded.

In 2017, a prime example is a social media campaign undertaken during the Stanley Cup hockey tournament (of all things!). After learning of the Nashville Predators’ fan tradition of tossing a whole catfish onto the ice prior to each home game, TCI’s creative gears went into action.

In short order, a digital advertising plan was developed and launched on social media platforms, which were targeted specifically at Predators fans throughout Tennessee and the surrounding region. Although the home team lost the Stanley Cup, the catfish industry was a clear winner, as the resulting fan interaction data was unprecedented.

TCI also expanded its presence at major rodeo events, as U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish sponsored more than a half-dozen of the South’s largest and most prestigious professional rodeos. In-arena graphics, over-air mentions and other special exposure opportunities successfully drove awareness.

**A total of 17 videos were completed by year’s end. All of them were honest, heartfelt and completely unscripted.**

Sports marketing has become a major focus of TCI marketing campaigns.
among this all-American audience.

In addition, we continued to capitalize on our core consumers’ love of Southeastern Conference football. At 10 different SEC football games this past season, a total of 50,000 handheld fans were custom-made and distributed at the stadium gates. As an added marketing layer, TCI tested new social media targeting technology, which allowed us to deliver special messages directly to fans’ phones inside the stadium. We are especially excited about opportunities to expand on this in the coming year!

A new print magazine advertisement was prominently placed in the Southeastern edition of Lindy’s Sports magazine, a leader in SEC athletics coverage for decades.

And lastly, a television advertising campaign ran from August through the end of the year, keying in on any opportunity to align with news coverage of sporting events—especially SEC football. You will be able to read more about these elements later in this report.

Collateral Branding

TCI continues to develop new printed collateral pieces each year, providing needful information, and recipes, for promoting our industry.

Outdoor billboards promoted U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish on 24 new digital boards in a dozen markets.

The annual calendar continues to be one of TCI’s most sought after collateral pieces.

The radio ads aired throughout the season on a broad network of stations across Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana and Tennessee.

To celebrate August as National Catfish Month, our marketing and
public relations campaign included outreach through our social media platforms; regional radio features by the 2017 Catfish Farmers of the Year; nationally broadcast television segments; and print ads in regional publications.

The radio ads aired throughout the season on a broad network of stations across Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana and Tennessee. These are designed to build industry pride, recognize our farmers and their families, and create awareness among our consumer base.

TCI continued its sponsorship of the Mr. Food Test Kitchen®, a nationally syndicated cooking show. Mr. Food airs daily in more than 130 television markets nationwide and reaches over 5.5 million viewers each day. Two new, nationally televised Mr. Food programs featuring U.S. Catfish aired during the month of August.

The popular Cooking Up Louisiana Treasures television program also produced a special episode for National Catfish Month this year. This syndicated series airs across a network of stations throughout the state of Louisiana, with additional outflow into Arkansas, Mississippi and Texas. The Louisiana Department of Agriculture cosponsors the program, and Commissioner Mike Strain, a longtime catfish industry supporter on both the regional and national level, helps to co-host many of the episodes.

Social Media

Thanks to carefully targeted outreach and timely posts throughout the year, TCI’s Facebook following grew to more than 100,000 fans, along with steady rates of growth occurring on our Twitter and Pinterest pages. We value the opportunity to interact directly with the public through these platforms, particularly during National Catfish Month, and look forward to continuing work in these areas.

Television Campaign

Now completing its fourth consecutive year, TCI’s television advertising campaign was bolstered with the creation of three new 30-second ads, one for each of the new Catfish Farmers of the Year. These were edited from the longer formatted “Catfish is Life” series and are receiving glowing reviews from both consumers and the industry alike. The ads air in targeted markets across the South during local nightly news on market-leading stations.

The Wrangler Network, the broadcast home of North America’s largest rodeos, opened the door to millions of rodeo fans across the continent, as U.S. Catfish continued its major sponsorship in hopes of reaching, perhaps, the nation’s most patriotic audience, with our “All-American” marketing messages.

And, as you read earlier, we also maintained our national television presence with the syndicated Mr. Food Test Kitchen® program, as well as with Cooking Up Louisiana Treasures, a statewide television program in Louisiana.

Outdoor Boards

TCI re-entered the outdoor billboard advertising space in 2017, thanks to the progress of the new, more affordable digital board platform. Digital
outdoor boards offer a much more cost-effective option over the old vinyl format, and it allows us to cover a much larger geographic footprint. As such, we maintained a presence throughout the year on 24 boards in 12 different markets, all in impressive, high-traffic locations across our core consumption area.

Seafood Expo North America

TCI is a longtime exhibitor at North America’s largest seafood trade show—Seafood Expo North America. The annual show boasts an attendance of more than 20,000 seafood buyers, many of whom visit our booth and taste-test U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish for the first time.

The 2017 Catfish Farmers of the Year were all in attendance this year—Mary Quitman Holmes of Alabama, who also happens to be the industry’s first female farmer so honored; Glen Fleming of Arkansas; and our industry’s first catfish farming “couple” of the year, Chris and Missy McGlawn of Mississippi.

Our team shared the message of all-American quality, freshness and food safety, as well as extreme culinary versatility. As always, we are appreciative of the time and effort donated by our farmers who traveled to Boston to provide first-hand knowledge of the industry, while providing a true show of force for the long-term viability and strength of U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish.

Co-Marketing Programs

Now in its tenth year, the Partnership Program leverages the marketing dollars of TCI’s member processors and state marketing organizations to further promote the U.S. Catfish industry. This program provides reimbursement for 50% of applicable marketing costs—up to a set amount of $30,000 per processor and $10,000 per state organization, per calendar year.

These partnership dollars fund a variety of marketing programs such as billboard, television and radio advertisements; collateral materials; website development; and many other special promotions. All funding requests are reviewed by an independent committee to ensure validity and sound use of industry resources.

Another extremely successful co-marketing initiative, the Sales Incentive Program, provides up to $50,000 per affiliated processor for consumer-directed promotions in restaurant and grocery chains across the nation.

New partnerships with restaurant chains, local catfish houses, grocery store chains and high-end, white tablecloth establishments have opened doors for our processors as they seek...
TCI funds marketing promotions at grocery stores, restaurants, foodservice distributors and various culinary events throughout the nation each year via its co-marketing programs.
to drive sales and broaden markets in the face of stiff competition from cheaper imports.

Young Farmer Leadership Program

Now in its seventh year, the Young Farmer Leadership Program, which is co-funded by TCI and Catfish Farmers of America, brings together the next generation of catfish industry leaders for two days of seminars, roundtable discussions and team building.

This year’s meetings were held in Washington, D.C., in concert with the annual industry fish fry. Our group of 28 farmers met not only with their elected officials, but also with American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duval, the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture CEO Barbara Glenn, as well as with the administrations of the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service, the USDA Agriculture Marketing Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The connections made through the Young Farmer Leadership Program will serve these young farmers well into the future and equip them for roles as leaders of state catfish organizations, TCI, CFA and other associations in the catfish industry.

Mail-Rebate Program

TCI’s mail-in rebate program continued for a third year, thanks to a partnership with R&V Works’ Cajun Cookers. This Louisiana-based
Our Best Recipes in Your Hand
Download The U.S. Catfish App

manufacturer of premium deep fryers, grills and smokers includes our rebate offers in every unit sold. By providing a $5 rebate on the purchase of two or more pounds of U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish, TCI is able to build brand awareness for our products and open doors for new and increased product sales nationwide.

Catfish App for Smartphones and Tablets

TCI continues to promote its smartphone app, which allows catfish lovers to explore recipes, watch cooking videos, and learn more about the U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish industry—all in the palm of their hand.

The app is completely free and can be found by searching “U.S. Catfish” in either the Apple App Store or on Google Play for Android devices.

Industry Research

Throughout the years, TCI has partnered with professional research firms in order to gain important consumer insight as to purchasing preferences, trends, flavor profiles, comparisons with competing species, and other parameters.

TCI’s agreement with Auburn University to produce the monthly catfish processing and feed delivery reports also continued in 2017. These reports provide timely, accurate, and comprehensive data that is crucial for the success of our industry.

In addition, this year TCI contracted with Auburn University to conduct a study on catfish consumption, distribution and economic impacts. This data will help inform the

TCI funds research projects to help meet the needs of the industry’s promotional programs, including the monthly Feed and Processing reports conducted by Auburn University.
Several states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee, require restaurants to identify the country of origin of the catfish they serve.

decisions made by our board of directors regarding promotions and advertising, as well as allow industry representatives to provide updated statistical information to national and state officials and others as needed.

Public Relations
Throughout the year, on an as-needed basis, TCI produces and distributes a series of “News Alerts.” These informative e-mails provide industry news to not only those in the U.S. catfish industry but also policymakers at the federal level in Washington as well as at the state level; agricultural leaders across the nation; and members of both the U.S. and foreign media.

Many of these news alerts were the basis for news stories that appeared in print or were discussed on radio and television segments nationwide. The benefit of these alerts is better information sharing among catfish industry constituents and better awareness of our issues in the media. With each News Alert comes a new interview opportunity and a new chance to share the story of U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish

Country of Origin Labeling Laws
Several states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee, require restaurants to identify the country of origin of the catfish they serve.

While these laws are a huge win for consumer food safety, they must be enforced to be truly effective. With limited staffing for frequent inspections, each state requires our help to have a successful law.

Please be a conscientious consumer. When you are dining at a restaurant, take note of whether catfish, or catfish-like species, are being sold. If they are not properly labeled, please call your state agency, as listed in the accompanying sidebar.

Restaurant Labeling Laws in Your State
Please be a conscientious consumer. When dining at a restaurant, take note of whether catfish, or imported catfish-like species, are being sold. If they are not properly labeled, please contact the appropriate state agency listed below.

ALABAMA
Alabama Farmers Federation
Mitt Walker
334.613.4757

ARKANSAS
Arkansas Bureau of Standards
Tom Pugh
501.225.1598

MISSISSIPPI
Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce
Gene Robertson
601.359.1111