Dear Friends:

As 2015 came to a close, our industry had enjoyed 29 consecutive months of pond bank prices over $1.00 per pound. Our marketing and promotional efforts are helping to drive a strong demand for U.S. Catfish products, which provides continued economic sustainability for our industry and its farmers.

Of significant importance for our industry, the USDA’s Food Safety Inspection Service published its final rule. The Catfish Institute (TCI) and Catfish Farmers of America (CFA) had been working on this legislation for eight years, and we are pleased to see it come to fruition, with implementation set to begin in 2016. Also, TCI, in conjunction with CFA, spearheaded the industry’s largest-ever government purchase, a total of $20 million, under the USDA’s Section 32 program.

This annual report is chock-full of TCI’s programs and activities, all of which are aimed at increasing consumer awareness and sales. TCI also engaged the services of some of the nation’s top research firms in an effort to better understand various consumer groups and their purchasing motivations.

TCI expanded its television and digital media into a new arena for 2015 with the advent of the Wrangler Network. Our work with ESPN, the SEC Network and local TV news outlets continued as well. We developed several major print pieces, including a 2016 calendar and a beautiful hardbound commemorative cookbook filled with 100 delicious catfish recipes.

Next year represents a significant anniversary for TCI as we celebrate 30 years of promotional activities on behalf of the U.S. Catfish industry. What began in 1986 by forward thinking farmers and feed mills continues today as a true testament to these men and their goals and vision for the future. Throughout these three decades, TCI has strived to provide the highest level of service and commitment to the marketing and success of this great industry.

Finally, we deeply appreciate those feed mills and their farmers who support TCI and its mission. A special thank you goes to the TCI Board of Directors for their unselfish involvement, insight and leadership. Our industry represents a model for other agriculture organizations throughout the United States.

Roger E. Barlow
President, The Catfish Institute

Harry Simmons, Jr.
Chairman, The Catfish Institute
The Catfish Institute Member Feed Mills

Alabama Catfish Feed Mill, LLC
Uniontown, Alabama

Delta Western
Indianola, Mississippi

Fishbelt Feeds
Moorhead, Mississippi

The Catfish Institute Board of Directors and Officers

Chairman
Harry Simmons, Jr.
Fishbelt Feeds

Vice-Chairman
David Pearce
Alabama Catfish Feed Mill, LLC

President
Roger E. Barlow
The Catfish Institute

Treasurer
Turner Arant
Delta Western

Bill Battle
Fishbelt Feeds

Joey Lowery
Fishbelt Feeds

Jonathan Mills
Delta Western

Joe Oglesby
Fishbelt Feeds

Harrell Potter
Fishbelt Feeds

Randy Rhodes
Alabama Catfish Feed Mill, LLC

Solon Scott, III
Delta Western

George Smelley
Alabama Catfish Feed Mill, LLC

Jim Tackett
Delta Western

Butch Wilson
Alabama Catfish Feed Mill, LLC

Seymour Johnson
Director Emeritus

THE CATFISH INSTITUTE

P. O. Box 1669 ★ Madison, Mississippi 39130
6311 Ridgewood Road, Suite W-404 ★ Jackson, Mississippi 39211
Phone: 601.977.9559 ★ Fax: 601.977.9632

www.UScatfish.com
The 2015 marketing year for The Catfish Institute (TCI) saw a number of new programs implemented, as well as the continuation of many successful programs from 2014 and prior years. As always, TCI’s goal is to drive consumer interest and demand for U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish. We hope you will agree that the programs highlighted in this report are innovative and successful, and are worthy of your continued support.

**Television Campaign**

Back in 2014, The Catfish Institute launched the industry’s first major television advertising campaign. For 2015, this was expanded with the addition of four new TV spots and an all-new media network.

TCI’s consumer research continues to show that family gatherings are at the core of the hearts and minds of catfish lovers, regardless of age, race, income or geographic location. Our new television spots utilize this information as we seek to influence the purchasing decisions of current and future generations.

A football-centric campaign on ESPN and the SEC Network continued from 2014 with both a larger footprint and more frequency. The ads also continued to air in targeted markets across the South during local nightly news on market-leading stations.

New for 2015 was the advent of the Wrangler Network, the new broadcast home of North America’s largest rodeos. The online-only streaming TV network opened the door to millions of rodeo fans across the continent, as U.S. Catfish became a major sponsor in hopes of reaching, perhaps, the nation’s most patriotic audience with our “All-American” marketing messages.

And, as you’ll read about later in this report, we also maintained our national television outreach through the syndicated Mr. Food Test Kitchen® program. This show continues to thrive, reaching more than 5 million households per episode.

Finally, our relationship with Cooking Up Louisiana Treasures, a statewide television program in Louisiana, was expanded thanks to TCI’s relationship with the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and its Commissioner, Dr. Mike Strain, who co-hosts the program.

Cooking Up Louisiana Treasures highlights locally sourced fruits, vegetables and proteins, such as U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish. Dr. Strain and Celeste Gill, a professional chef, work together in the kitchen to offer viewers new and exciting recipe ideas for homegrown delicacies.

**Collateral Branding**

TCI continues to promote the “100% American” logo tagline for all consumer marketing activities. This provides a strong sense of place and a connection to the “eat local” movement that is increasingly popular in today’s consumer marketplace.

We debuted several new printed pieces this year, including our annual Catfish Farmers of the Year “Favorite Recipes” brochure. New restaurant table tents were developed with a series of industry facts, which seek to educate diners about where their food comes from and how it is raised. These have been very well received, and we hope to distribute these even more broadly in the coming year.

*Cooking Up Louisiana Treasures and the Mr. Food Test Kitchen continue to be a large part of our television marketing efforts.*
For decades, American catfish farmers have been providing delicious, premium quality food for your family’s table. As The Catfish Institute celebrates its 30th anniversary, we’re proud to share with you this collection of classic and new recipes.

Raised in pure, freshwater ponds, U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish is renowned for its consistent freshness and superior quality. Its flaky texture and perfectly mild flavor work in almost any recipe. From golden fried classics to new twists on old favorites, you’ll find a dish to please everyone at the table.

Thank you for supporting our American farmers – and remember to look for the U.S. Farm-Raised seal to ensure you’re buying the best, 100% American Catfish.

A new 12-month wall calendar.

This hard-bound cookbook features our 100 favorite catfish recipes.
We are particularly pleased with the creation of a new monthly recipe calendar. It offers a dozen seasonal variations of catfish dishes sure to keep consumers coming back for more!

And as we look ahead to 2016, a unique hardbound cookbook celebrating the 30th anniversary of The Catfish Institute was also created. For this treasure, we scoured through our archives of hundreds of recipes that were developed over these last three decades, narrowing them down to our 100 favorites, which are included in this commemorative book.

**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 2015 Catfish Farmers of the Year were all in attendance this year—Sage Spree of Alabama, Greg Moyers of Arkansas and Jon Cooper 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.

**Record-Breaking Federal Purchase**

Over the past decade, TCI and Catfish Farmers of America have enjoyed great success in their joint petitions to USDA for federal purchases to assist with oversupply. These purchases use federal funds to place U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish into many different government programs, including the National School Lunch Program and the Emergency Food Assistance Program. In the face of potentially detrimental frozen inventories due to sluggish sales, these purchases help shore up pond bank prices for our farmers, which offers industry stability and better peace of mind.

In 2015, our industry received its largest-ever federal purchase authorization, totaling up to $20 million for the 2015-2016 fiscal year. These purchases will be spread across the coming months, allowing for a gradual correction in inventories and, hopefully, a long term benefit to the farmers. Over the past decade, federal purchases sought and received by TCI and CFA have reached $45 million.

**Young Farmer Leadership Program**

Now in its sixth 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 throughout Alabama’s catfish farming region and culminated with a series of tours and presentations at the Auburn University School of Fisheries.

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 manufacturer of premium deep fryers, grills and smokers includes our rebate forms 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.

National Catfish Month

Each year, TCI promotes August as National Catfish Month. During 2015, the marketing and public relations campaign included outreach through our social media platforms; regional radio features by TCI President Roger Barlow and the 2015 Catfish Farmers of the Year; nationally broadcast television segments; and print ads in regional publications.

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

The previously mentioned Cooking Up Louisiana Treasures television program also produced a special episode for National Catfish Month. This syndicated series airs across a network of stations throughout the state of Louisiana, with additional overflow into Arkansas, Mississippi and Texas.

Co-Marketing Programs

Now in its ninth 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 per processor and 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 relatively new, but extremely popular and successful co-marketing initiative, known as the Sales Incentive Program, provides for consumer-
TCI’s recipe app is free and available for all smart phones and other devices.

directed promotions in restaurant and grocery chains across the nation.

New partnerships with restaurant franchises, local catfish houses, grocery store chains and high-end, white tablecloth establishments have opened doors for our processors as they seek to drive sales and broaden markets in the face of stiff competition from cheaper imports.

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 the 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.

Social Media

TCI’s Facebook following grew to more than 66,000 people, with similar rates of growth occurring on our Twitter and Pinterest pages. We value the opportunity to interact directly with the public through these platforms and look forward to continuing work in these areas.

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 so on. Two new major research projects were completed in 2015.

The first involved the next generation of catfish consumers. A national research firm based in Birmingham, Ala., was hired to explore the minds of the millennial generation, which is comprised of consumers born during the 1980s and 1990s. This demographic group is key to the future success of our industry, and as such, we have already put much of what we have learned from this research in place for current and...
future marketing plans.

In addition, another national research firm, based in Springfield, Mo., was hired to conduct catfish consumption research across the foodservice sector. This insight provided windows of opportunity for expanding our industry presence, or regaining lost ground, in influential dining establishments.

TCI’s agreement with Auburn University to produce the monthly catfish processing and feed delivery reports also continued in 2015. These reports provide timely, accurate, and comprehensive data that is crucial for the success of our industry.

Country of Origin Labeling Laws

Several states-including Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee-currently require restaurants to identify the country of origin of the catfish they serve.

To make it even easier for consumers to obtain information when ordering catfish in restaurants, Alabama and Arkansas strengthened their country of origin labeling laws during the 2015 legislative session. Restaurants in each state will now have to identify the country of origin of both catfish and catfish-like species, including imported pangasius (also known as basa, tra and swai).

Based on the the Mississippi labeling law, the recently amended Alabama statute requires restaurants to identify on the menu, or in a conspicuous location, the country of origin of catfish and catfish-like species they serve. The new Alabama law went into effect August 1, 2015.

In Arkansas, similar legislation was enacted, which requires imported catfish and catfish-like species to be identified as such on restaurant menus. Upon request, a restaurant must identify the actual country of origin of catfish or catfish-like fish served. The new Arkansas law goes into effect January 1, 2016.

These newly improved laws are a huge win for consumer safety, but they must be enforced to be truly effective. With limited staffing for frequent inspections, each state requires the public’s 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.

News Alerts

TCI produces and distributes a bi-weekly 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. Twenty-one News Alerts were distributed to over 3,000 contacts in 2015.

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

**Issues Management**

Several promising long-term trends for U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish producers and processors were revealed by issues research during 2015. Americans are becoming more aware of the importance of selecting U.S. and locally grown food over imports.

As a result, grocery stores are rapidly growing their offerings of local produce. These consumer preferences and marketing decisions are partly influenced by long-term quality problems with food imports including Asian-sourced catfish and catfish-like species. Not surprisingly, food safety groups continue urging enhanced import inspections at our borders and maintaining strong federal country of origin labeling (COOL) requirements nationwide.

Fostered in part by TCI's continuing public relations efforts, a growing number of Americans are becoming aware of the higher quality of locally produced food—including seafood—compared to imports. Consumers chose food safety as their highest priority in a recent national phone survey by the non-profit Chicago Council on Global Affairs (CGA). The CGA study and other opinion research find a growing number of Americans want to know where and how their food is produced. Most importantly, a vast majority prefer U.S. produced seafood over imports.

Supermarkets are responding to these trends. A new U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) study reports they are devoting more space to locally and regionally grown foods, reflecting the popularity of local farmers markets. Overall sales of U.S. grown food increased by 30 percent between 2007 and 2012, according to a 2015 USDA Economic Research Service report to Congress.

Moreover, growing consumer demand for local food is increasingly being met by food service companies and retailers. Although growth in local farm markets appears to have leveled-off, traditional distribution chains are now meeting consumer demand.

Beyond supermarkets and food distributors, schools and other institutional meal servers are also offering more locally produced food. Last year, 42,000 schools nationwide spent about $600 million to purchase locally produced food for their meals programs, the USDA reported. That's a 55 percent increase from two years ago, representing healthier school meals for children and new marketing opportunities for U.S. Catfish farmers.
When you look for the U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish seal, you’re looking out for your family, and for our American farmers. Their pure, freshwater ponds and strict standards ensure U.S. Catfish is the freshest, healthiest fish available. And you can rely on that perfectly mild flavor year-round.

For recipes and more information, be sure to visit UScatfish.com.