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RESOLUTION AQUACULTURE

The farm-raised catfish industry has grown into one of the most important Delta industries, in terms of jobs, and economic impact.

In the area of research and education, Delta Council stresses the importance of catfish genetics programs and disease research as the two highest priorities. The catfish breeding program at Stoneville is absolutely fundamental to the long-term future of meeting the challenges which face catfish production. Similarly, disease research, nutrition research, epidemiology, and both preventive and remedial treatments for disease are critical to the ability of catfish farmers to cope with the growing list of known and unknown causes of fish losses.

Delta Council stresses the importance of maintaining the availability of products to manage off-flavor in catfish ponds, and encourages private companies, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, and Stoneville scientists to continue to take the necessary steps to ensure that off-flavor in catfish ponds is controlled to a manageable level.

Catfish predators and especially cormorants, pelicans and herons, cause heavy losses, rising costs, and exposure to the transmission of diseases in catfish ponds. Delta Council calls upon USDA-APHIS, USDA-ARS, Mississippi State University, and the United States Department of Interior to initiate aggressive action for the purpose of managing populations of avian predators that have become one of the chief culprits in fish losses and disease in recent years. We place special emphasis on research to combat trematodes that have caused severe economic distress in catfish production.

We applaud our Congressional Delegation for renewed efforts to include the damage from bird depredation and resulting disease transmission as eligible for assistance under the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP). Bird depredation and disease transmission from these avian predators are estimated at more than \$25 million annually for the catfish industry alone and we urge USDA-FSA to include farm-raised catfish losses in this program as was designed.

Delta Council applauds the efforts of Catfish Farmers of America and The Catfish Institute in addressing the dumping and unfair trade perpetrated by centrally-planned governments of countries in Asia.

Delta Council views that it is essential that the U.S. farm-raised catfish industry engage in the development of a capacity to maintain accurate production and consumption data on a real-time basis. Other U.S. commodities have benefited from the availability of accurate domestic and world production/consumption/warehouse data, provided by USDA, in terms of analyzing and developing national policy. The U.S. farm-raised catfish industry, similar to other commodities, should be provided with accurate and timely economic data in order to make more informed investment decisions at the farmgate, the processing facilities, the feed mills and the allied agricultural operations.

Delta Council enlists the support of USDA to join with the catfish industry to institute a product grading system and inspection for farm-raised catfish. Further, Delta Council supports the full implementation of Section 32 marketing programs during periods of economic stress in the industry.

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