

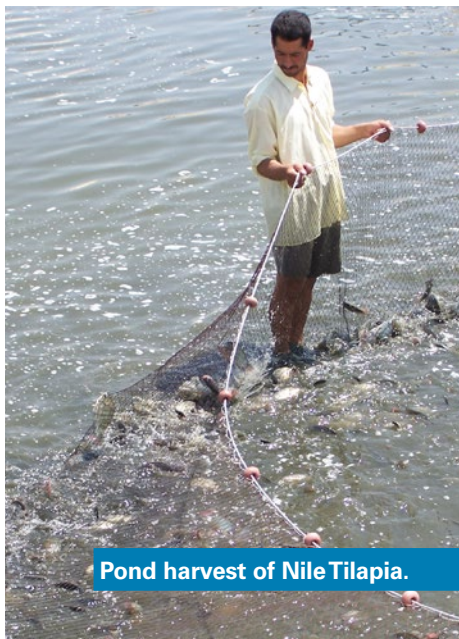
# Aquaculture



## Iowa Fish Processing Frequently Asked Questions

### INTRODUCTION

Aquaculture production is the fastest growing segment of agriculture on a global scale, and is a growing industry in Iowa. Global seafood demand is at an all-time high, with more than half the total seafood consumed coming from aquaculture. In the United States, more than 90 percent of the consumed seafood is imported from overseas, leaving an annual trade deficit of over \$12 billion. Recently, concerns about imported seafood quality and a desire for locally produced foods has created new opportunities for Iowa farmers to diversify their farm income beyond traditional row crops and livestock enterprises. Aquaculture is being practiced by people from all walks of life and is even being used as a teaching tool for science educators.



Pond harvest of Nile Tilapia.



Fresh Hybrid Striped Bass on ice.

New aquaculture producers enter the industry at different production scales, with varying levels of aquaculture skills, experience, and education, creating a gap in knowledge about the regulations associated with seafood processing.

Fish processing is a necessary step in the development of a mature seafood industry, and food safety and human health are foundational to making it sustainable. Getting these seafood products to the consumer can be done through a variety of methods including whole-live fish, head-on gutted, and fresh or frozen fillets. In order to ensure these products are safe for the consumer, the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals regulates seafood processing. This publication provides answers to several frequently asked questions (FAQs) related to seafood processing in Iowa.

### FAQS ABOUT FISH AND FISHERY PRODUCTS

#### DEFINITIONS OF FISH

Fish means fresh or saltwater finfish, crustaceans, and other forms of aquatic life (including alligator, frog, aquatic turtle, jellyfish, sea cucumber, sea urchin, and the roe of such animals) other than birds or mammals, and all mollusks, if such animal life is intended for human consumption (Iowa Food Code 1-201.10).

Fish includes an edible human food product derived in whole or in part from fish, including fish that have been processed in any manner (Iowa Food Code 1-201.10).

**Q. Can a food establishment or food processing plant receive fish from an aquaculturist, commercial turtle harvester, commercial roe harvester, or commercial fisher?**

A. Yes, provided the aquaculturist, commercial turtle harvester, commercial roe harvester, or commercial fisher is properly licensed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (Iowa DNR) and the fish have not been processed in any way.

**Q. What type of licenses does the Iowa DNR issue related to culturing or harvesting fish for human consumption?**

A. The DNR issues five licenses to harvest and sell wild caught fish or to culture fish.

A commercial fisher license allows an individual to harvest designated fish species from the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, including turtles. (No commercial fishing is allowed in the Big Sioux River. Commercial fishers are allowed to commercially harvest designated fish species from inland waters of the state on a contract basis.)

A resident commercial turtle harvester license allows an individual to harvest turtles from Iowa waters.

A nonresident commercial turtle harvester license allows an individual (nonresident) to harvest turtles from the Mississippi River, Missouri River, and the Big Sioux Rivers only. It is unlawful for a nonresident or alien to take



Skin-on fillets ready to cook.

turtles from any other locations in Iowa (Iowa Code 481A.121).

An aquaculture unit license allows individuals to culture fish.

A commercial roe harvester allows individuals to harvest roe species for purposes of taking roe.

**Q. What proof can a food establishment or food processing plant provide to an inspector to verify the fish have been received from an approved source?**

A. The food establishment can supply the invoice that lists the name and address of the commercial fisher, commercial turtle harvester, commercial roe harvester, or aquaculturist and the date, quantity, and species purchased. It would be helpful if the food establishment also provided a copy of the suppliers DNR issued license.

**Q. Can a commercial fisher, commercial turtle harvester, commercial roe harvester, or aquaculturist process and sell fish to food establishments without a food establishment or food processing plant license?**

A. No, a food establishment or food processing plant license is required to process and purchase fish for resale.

**Q. Can a commercial fisher, commercial turtle harvester, commercial roe harvester, or aquaculturist process and sell fish direct to consumers without a license issued by the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA) or one of the local contracting agencies?**

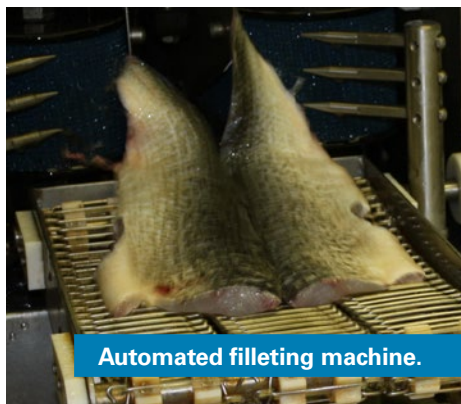
A. No, fish are considered a potentially hazardous food and therefore licensure as a food establishment or a food processing plant is required.

**Q. What activities can a commercial fisher, commercial turtle harvester, commercial roe harvester, or aquaculturist do without licensing as a food establishment or food processing plant?**

A. Activities that do not require licensing are limited to washing and icing.

**Q. What activities are considered “processing” and require licensing as a food establishment or food processing plant?**

A. Processing activities include heading, gutting, cutting, filleting, freezing, storing, and packaging.



Automated filleting machine.

**Q. Can a food establishment process properly received fish with a retail food establishment or a food service establishment license?**

- A. Yes, the current rules only require a food processing license if the facility's predominant form of business is wholesale.

**Q. Can a food establishment sell fish or fishery products wholesale?**

- A. Yes, however any fish or fishery products that are sold wholesale are subject to Seafood HACCP regulations regardless of whether the establishment is licensed as a food establishment or a food processing plant. In January 2014, Iowa adopted 21 CFR Part 123 which states that if a food establishment is actively wholesaling fish as a normal part of their business, DIA should be notified for guidance. If the establishment's predominate form of business is wholesale then DIA would license the facility as a food processing plant.

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For more information regarding aquaculture, value-added products, food safety, and regulations, please refer to the contacts below.

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