



U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish Environmental Sustainability Certification Program

An American Standard for Sustainability

Responsible environmental management of farms has become increasingly important to consumers, farmers, and retailers. The U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish industry is committed to producing the highest-quality products in an environmentally responsible manner.

Consumers are confused by the myriad of labels and seals on seafood packaging. Research has shown the name they trust most for ensuring quality is the **USDA verification label**. The *U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish Environmental Sustainability Certification Program* has been developed as an alternative to other confusing international programs.

The *U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish Environmental Sustainability Certification Program* for Catfish Production provides clear and auditable definitions of management practices that reduce environmental impacts from catfish production while improving husbandry practices and health of the catfish raised.

The *U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish Environmental Sustainability Certification Program* will result in the development of a quality management system for U.S. catfish production that is being specifically requested by customers and that will convey specific information regarding the environmental sustainability of U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish.

The USDA-PVP program includes standards for U.S. Catfish farms, hatcheries, feed mills, and processing plants. As you will see in the comparisons within this document, these standards meet or exceed those of the leading global certification program, GAA-BAP.



Verified Process Points

Specific process points to verified by USDA-PVP include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Fishmeal and fish oil conservation**
- **Protection of wild fish stocks**
- **Adherence to EPA Effluent Limitation Guidelines**
- **Adherence to EPA spill prevention / control of farm supplies and wastes**
- **Adherence to EPA laws and regulations for chemical handling**
- **Management of fish-eating birds according to USFWS permits**
- **Management of critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act**

These verified process points can be applied to the entire supply chain – **feed mill, hatchery, grow-out farm, and processing plant** – equivalent to a 4-Star GAA-BAP certification. The U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish industry upholds **social justice** according to United States federal and state laws, while also undergoing continuous USDA-FSIS **food safety** inspection.

The *U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish Environmental Sustainability Certification Program* standard for catfish production provides clear definitions for responsible environmental stewardship for catfish producers who choose to further reduce environmental impacts, improve management practices, and provide greater accountability to their buyers and the public. **The program will require that individual farms participate in the quality management system for environmental sustainability, which is third-party audited for compliance.**

The Process Verified Points included in the *U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish Environmental Sustainability Certification Program* are those for which no regulations or quality management system criteria are currently in place. These process verified points conform to Items 6.3.b (“production and/or handling practice that provides specific information to consumers to enable them to make informed decisions on the products that they buy”) and 6.3.e (“characteristic, practice, or requirement that is specifically requested by a customer or consumer”) of the QAD 1001 Procedure of the USDA Process Verified Procedure.



USDA-PVP Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why is the U.S. Catfish industry working with USDA to develop a certification program?

A: U.S. consumers are confused about the multitude of certification labels, including the GAA-BAP. The seal that they trust the most is that of USDA.

Q: Are the audits done by the same people GAA-BAP utilizes for their audits?

A: The USDA-AMS-PVP program operates under the ISO 9000 Quality Management System. Auditors are trained employees of the Quality Assessment Division of USDA-AMS, and not paid directly by the companies being audited, as with BAP. Thus, there is no conflict of interest on the part of the USDA-AMS auditors as there is with the BAP program.

Q: Why would the catfish industry choose to work with USDA for this program?

A: Poultry, beef, and pork industries participate in the USDA-AMS-PVP program and use the USDA seal on their products. Catfish is a domesticated livestock as well, inspected for food safety by USDA-FSIS, similar to other meat products.

Q: Is USDA-PVP regulated differently than GAA-BAP?

A: The USDA-AMS-PVP program is backed by U.S. standards, laws, and enforcement; BAP programs in other countries are not.

Q: Are the two programs the same? Is USDA-PVP better?

A: GAA and BAP were formed to assist overseas shrimp companies to sell more shrimp into the U.S. Their focus on imports continues to be reflected in their selection for their Board of Directors. Given that most of the imported product is from developing countries, it is difficult for BAP to match the rigor of U.S. environmental laws, testing, and enforcement.

Q: Why is this program being developed, right now?

A: U.S. farmed catfish has been a Best Choice in terms of environmental sustainability by Seafood Watch for a long time. Now, we are choosing to also welcome the rigor of 3rd-party USDA auditors onto our farms, hatcheries, feed mills, and processing plants for additional scrutiny of our practices.



Table 1. Comparison of GAA-BAP environmental sustainability standards with those of the U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish Environmental Sustainability Program of USDA-AMS-PVP

GAA-BAP Standard – Pillar 3: Environmental Responsibility	USDA-AMS-PVP U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish Environmental Sustainability Program
Effluent management	<p>U.S. EPA laws protect the water quality of U.S. waters through their rigorous and comprehensive Effluent Limitation Guidelines that are enforce by state departments of environmental quality.</p> <p>USEPA. 2004a. Website for the Aquatic Animal Production Industry Effluent Guidelines. http://epa.gov/guide/aquaculture.</p> <p>USEPA. 2004b. Effluent Limitation Guidelines and New Source Performance Standards for the Concentrated Aquatic Animal Production Point Source Category: Final Rule. Federal Register 69(162) Part II. United States Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, D.C. Available at: https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2004/08/23/04-15530/effluent-limitations-guidelines-and-new-source-performance-standards-for-the-concentrated-aquatic.</p> <p>USEPA. 2004c. Technical Development Document for the Final Effluent Limitations Guidelines and New Source Performance Standards for the Concentrated Aquatic Animal Production Point Source Category (Revised August 2004). EPA 821-R-04-012, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Water, Washington, DC. Available at: http://epa.gov/guide/aquaculture/.</p> <p>USEPA. 2004d. Economic and Environmental Benefit Analysis of the Final Effluent Limitations Guidelines and Standards for the Concentrated Aquatic Animal Production Point Source Category. EPA 821-R-04-013, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Water, Washington, DC. Available at: http://epa.gov/guide/aquaculture/.</p> <p>USEPA. 2006. Compliance Guide for the Concentrated Aquatic Animal Production Point Source Category. EPA-821-B-05-001. Office of Water, United States Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, DC 20460. Available at https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-11/documents/caap-aquaculture_compliance-guide_2006.pdf.</p>



Introducing the Future of Sustainable Catfish: USDA's New Certification Program

We are excited to announce a significant development that will shape the future of the catfish industry and reaffirm our commitment to sustainability. As a valued Delta Pride customer, we want to share with you the forthcoming change to the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) newly created Environmental Sustainability Certification Program.

What is the USDA's Sustainability Certification Program?

The USDA's Sustainability Certification Program is an innovative initiative designed to establish rigorous sustainability standards for the catfish industry. This program aims to ensure the long-term viability of catfish farming while promoting environmentally responsible practices, social stewardship, and economic resilience.

Why is this change important?

By transitioning to the USDA's Sustainability Certification Program, we are taking proactive steps to enhance our commitment to sustainable catfish production. This shift demonstrates our dedication to protecting the environment, supporting local communities, and delivering the highest quality products to you, our valued customers.

Key Benefits for You:

1. **Enhanced Environmental Responsibility:** The USDA's Sustainability Certification Program sets comprehensive guidelines for environmentally friendly practices in catfish farming. By adhering to these standards, we are minimizing our ecological footprint and preserving our natural resources for future generations.
2. **Strengthened Social Stewardship:** Our transition to the USDA's program ensures that we prioritize the well-being of the communities in which we operate. We are committed to fair labor practices, community engagement, and maintaining strong relationships with our employees, customers, and stakeholders.