Overview of Shellfish Aquaculture

According to the United States Department of Agriculture’s 2018 Census of Aquaculture, shellfish farming was the second highest valued aquaculture product in Florida in 2018, bringing in $15.5 million in farm gate sales. To date, there are 358 shellfish leases covering more than 1,500 acres in Florida.

Shellfish farming is a multistep process, including hatchery production of seed (larvae) by spawning adult broodstock, nursery rearing of juveniles to a size sufficient for planting on leases, growout on submerged land leases to a marketable size and processing at certified shellfish processing facilities. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), Division of Aquaculture certifies all aquaculturists, issues and regulates all aquaculture leases and certifies all shellfish processors in the state.

Shellfish Hatcheries and Nurseries

Hatcheries are typically land-based facilities that require an Aquaculture Certificate of Registration for the location, and must be annually inspected by Division staff to ensure compliance with all applicable Aquaculture Best Management Practices (BMPs). Hatcheries can be operated using a saltwater well or intake pipes from waters of the state. Farmers often produce their own live algae as well to feed larval shellfish. Nurseries can be land-based or on an aquaculture dock. These systems typically consist of raceways or upwellers utilizing nearshore water containing natural algae to cost-effectively grow seed to a size that can then be planted on a lease.

Once clams reach 16 millimeters (approximately 3/4-inch) in shell length or oysters reach 25 millimeters (approximately 1-inch) in shell length, they must be moved to approved waters for growout (see page 3). Both hatcheries and nurseries must be designed and operated to meet BMPs.

For more information about Aquaculture Docks or an Aquaculture Letter of Consent to place intake or discharge pipes or aquaculture nursery equipment into state waters, please see the Aquaculture Docks fact sheet.
**Lease Audits**

Each January, aquaculture leaseholders are required to complete an Affidavit of Audit (for shellfish / live rock) that details plantings and harvesting activities on each lease. Leaseholders must submit copies of all seedstock receipts, health certificates and proof of broodstock origin for out-of-state sources (see page 7) the previous year. The audit also allows staff to verify whether the leaseholder has satisfied the minimum cultivation requirements.

**Effective cultivation for clams**

requires planting a minimum of 100,000 clams per acre annually and oysters require planting a minimum of 70,000 oysters per acre annually.

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**Authorized Users**

A leaseholder may allow another individual or company to operate on their lease as an Authorized User (AU). Note that the leaseholder is responsible for the activities of the AU and all lease rules and requirements.

An **AU Acknowledgement form** must be completed annually (expires on June 30 each year) for anyone working or selling shellfish in their name or company separate from your lease agreement name or company. All AUs must also obtain a separate Aquaculture Certificate of Registration. **The AU form can be downloaded here:**

Forms.DOACS.State.FL.us/15107.pdf

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**Lease Transfers**

Leases may not be transferred or subleased for 5 years from the effective lease date. Contact the Division for more information.

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**Submerged Land Leases**

All shellfish aquaculture leases are located in Approved and Conditionally Approved Shellfish Harvesting Areas. The producer’s Aquaculture Certificate of Registration number must accompany shellfish being transported from a hatchery or nursery and to and from approved lease areas. Once the shellfish have reached the preferred size for sale, they are harvested from the leases, tagged and sold to a Florida certified shellfish processing facility. Direct to retail sales of shellfish is prohibited. See page 9 for regulations related to retail sales. More information regarding processing can be found on page 8.

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**For more information about the leasing process and obtaining an aquaculture lease, please review the Submerged Lands Leasing Process for Aquaculture fact sheet.**

To download an application and view current lease availability, visit:

www.FDACS.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Aquaculture/Aquaculture-Submerged-Land-Leasing

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**Aquaculture Certification of Registration**

Any company or person engaging in commercial aquaculture (leaseholders, sublessees and authorized users) is required to obtain an Aquaculture Certificate of Registration (AQ Certificate) and comply with all applicable Aquaculture Best Management Practices (BMPs). The AQ Certificate identifies the aquaculturist, their lease, product and/or facility. Personnel employed by a leaseholder are covered under the leaseholder’s AQ Certificate number. Persons who are not employees and are engaged in culturing and harvesting shellfish from leases are considered Authorized Users (see more information about authorized users in the box to the left). **The AQ Certificate is valid July 1 to June 30 and must be renewed annually at a cost of $100.**

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**Annual Lease Fees**

Aquaculture lease fees are paid annually based on the number of acres leased and the lease type, and are subject to annual adjustment by the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund based on the Consumer Price Index established for the previous five years. Current bottom lease fees are $16.73 per acre and every fraction thereof, plus a $10.00 surcharge per acre and fraction thereof. Water column lease fees are $33.46 per acre and every fraction thereof, plus a $10.00 surcharge per acre and fraction thereof. Payment is due on January 1 of each year, and annual billing statements are mailed to each leaseholder approximately 60 days before payment is due.

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**Shellfish Harvester Education Training**

Each shellfish dealer, harvester and AQ Certificate holder producing shellfish is required to complete the Shellfish Harvest Education Training (HET), which is an interactive education video regarding proper handling and harvesting of shellfish product. Following completion, a signed certificate will be issued for submission along with any licensing or certification application. **An application or renewal for an AQ certificate that includes shellfish as a product will not be processed without a valid copy of your HET.**

The training can be taken online at: LearningMyFWC.remote-learner.net/login/index.php Contact the Division for assistance taking the training or to attend an in-person training.

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**Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services**

FDACS-P-00000 05/20
Managing Pathogenic Bacteria in Shellfish

Shellfish are filter feeders, which means that they get food and oxygen by pumping large amounts of water across their gills. In addition to food particles, shellfish may take in pathogenic bacteria (bacteria that can cause disease), harmful algae species or chemical contaminants from the surrounding environment. Pathogenic bacteria can be concentrated in shellfish digestive systems and tissues at over 100 times the levels in the surrounding water.

Since shellfish are often eaten raw or partially cooked, shellfish that are harvested from polluted areas or during times where pathogenic bacteria are abundant (such as after significant rainfall events) pose a significant health hazard for consumers. Individuals with compromised immune systems are particularly at risk for becoming ill from eating raw or undercooked shellfish.

To minimize the risk of shellfish-borne illness, the Division routinely monitors shellfish harvesting areas for the presence of pathogenic bacteria. Each year, the Division collects and analyzes water quality and bacterial data from roughly 1,200 sampling stations in 38 different shellfish harvesting areas, encompassing more than 1.4 million acres throughout the state.

For more information about shellfish harvesting area management, visit: www.FDAC.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Aquaculture/Shellfish/Shellfish-Harvesting-Area-Classification
Lease Marking Requirements

The exterior boundaries of individual water column leases and Aquaculture Use Zones (AUZ) are designated with corner markers, which have the following requirements:

1) A greater than 6-inch diameter pole with a sign installed a minimum of 3-feet above mean high water.
2) A 3-foot x 3-foot, yellow diamond sign (1/2-inch medium density plywood or 1/8-inch commercial grade aluminum) with 2-inch darker yellow border.
3) A 12-inch black block letter as specified in your lease agreement.
4) Corner direction (i.e. NE, NW, SE, SW) and lease or parcel number (e.g., L-123).
5) A flashing yellow marine lantern for water column leases.

The boundary of each individual lease is designated by a parcel post or buoy, which have the following requirements:

1) Posts must be white and have a minimum diameter of 1 1/2-inch (2-inch PVC pipe is most commonly used).
2) International orange bands of reflective tape at the top and bottom, at a minimum of 18-inches above mean high water.
3) Corner direction (NE, NW, SE, SW) and lease or parcel number (e.g., L-123) in 1-inch black block characters.
4) Buoys must be maintained upright at a minimum height of 14-inches above mean high water mark and also contain the corner direction (NE, NW, SE, SW), and lease or parcel number (e.g., L-123) in 1-inch black block characters.

Labeling Suspended and Floating Gear

The leaseholder’s identification information shall be attached to all floating or off-bottom culturing structures. In the event that floating or off-bottom culturing structures become unanchored and lost, gear tags allow the leaseholder’s property to be identified and improve the likelihood of being returned to the owner. This can be especially important during severe weather events when multiple leases may lose gear at the same time. The leaseholder is required to retrieve any dislodged structures or equipment from the shoreline, seagrass beds or submerged bottom with minimal damage to the resources affected. Any derelict structures must be removed and properly disposed of or returned to the lease site.

Gear tags come in a variety of types and designs. Contact the University of Florida, Shellfish Extension office at LNST@UFL.edu for more information about gear tags and current suppliers.
Marine lanterns, if required, must be U.S. Coast Guard approved. Vendors include, but are not limited to:

**Essi Corporation**
200 Cummings Road
Broussard, Louisiana 70518
Telephone: (337) 837-3774
Fax: (337) 837-3712
Website: EssiCorp.com

**McDermott Corporation**
1639 Stephen Road
Ridgewood, NY 11385
Phone: (718) 456-3606
Fax: (718) 381-0229
Website: McDermottLight.com

**Go Deep International**
10 Watertower Road
Saint John, New Brunswick Canada, E2M 7K2
Phone: (506) 633-7850 x204
Fax: (506) 633-7859
Website: BuoysAndLights.com

**Sealite USA LLC.**
61 Business Park Drive
Tilton, NH 03276
Phone: (603) 737-1311
Fax: (603) 737-1320
Website: SeaLiteUSA.com

**Tideland Signal Corp.**
7100 Business Park Drive
Houston, TX 77041
Phone: (713) 681-6101
Fax: (713) 681-6233
Website: TideLandSignal.com

Optional Theft Prevention Signs: A 2-foot x 2-foot sign must extend 3-feet above mean high water and must include: 1) A white field with international orange bands of reflective tape around the perimeter; 2) the “circle symbol” using international orange reflective tape; and 3) the phrase: “HARVEST PROHIBITED EXCEPT BY LESSEE”. 

Vendor information does not imply an endorsement by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Vendors not listed are welcome to contact the Division of Aquaculture with their information and this fact sheet will be updated.
Resubmerging Shellfish

Pursuant to Rule Chapter 5L-1, F.A.C., sorting or washing of shellfish may be performed by the aquaculturist over their lease or received and cleaned by a certified shellfish processing facility during normal operation hours.

Aquacultured shellfish that are replanted or resubmerged following routine husbandry practices, such as cleaning, must be segregated from other shellfish on the lease and must be clearly identified.

Due to the rapid growth of Vibrio bacteria in unsubmerged oysters during summer months, aquacultured oysters larger than 20 millimeters (approximately 3/4-inch) that are removed from the water during the course of routine oyster husbandry practices for more than 4 hours during April through October must be returned to the lease and submerged on an aquaculture lease for a minimum of 14 days before they can be harvested and sold to a certified shellfish processing facility. Routine oyster husbandry practices include the use of suspended growout containers that may be unsubmerged during natural tidal cycles.

Aquaculturists must maintain a replant log of all replant and resubmergence activities that includes:
1) Date of initial removal from water at lease site
2) Lease number
3) Date of replant
4) Replant lease number
5) Replant location on lease
6) Replant species and quantity

See page 8 for more information on harvest and processing requirements for Vibrio control.

Aquaculture Best Management Practices

In order to establish a streamlined regulatory process, FDACS created the Aquaculture Certificate of Registration (AQ Certificate) program and Aquaculture Best Management Practices (BMPs). BMPs are required to be followed by all certified aquaculturists. The Division conducts periodic, unannounced inspections of each certified aquaculture facility, including submerged land leases, to ensure compliance with BMPs and the lease terms.

As a leaseholder, you are agreeing to comply with all applicable BMPs and the terms of your aquaculture lease agreement. Noncompliance may result in cancellation of the lease agreement and/or the prohibition from acquiring or subletting any new sovereignty submerged lands. The following BMPs are not all of the shellfish aquaculture rules. It is your responsibility to ensure you are following all applicable regulations. Refer to the BMP Manual or contact the Division any time for clarification.

Select Shellfish Aquaculture BMPs

♦ All stock placed on leases must be native to Florida.
♦ All shellfish nurseries or hatchery locations must be listed on the AQ Certificate.
♦ All farmed shellfish must be transported or shipped in distinct containers and identified by the producer’s AQ Certificate number.
♦ Shellfish must be harvested, tagged, transported and processed in compliance Rule 5L-1, Florida Administrative Code. See page 8 for more information.
♦ Activity on aquaculture leases is allowed from sunrise to sunset.
♦ Relaying wild shellfish to a lease is strictly prohibited.
♦ No vessel of any description shall be moored on or adjacent to a lease for a period exceeding 24 hours, regardless of whether the vessel is periodically moved.
♦ Mechanical harvesting is prohibited on aquaculture leases, unless specified in your lease agreement.
♦ The leaseholder’s identification information shall be attached to all floating or off-bottom culturing structures, and it is the leaseholder’s responsibility to retrieve any lost gear or structures and properly dispose of derelict gear.
♦ Non-natural materials placed in the water or on submerged lands shall be anchored to the bottom. This includes any protective netting used to cover clam bags.
♦ All culture materials and equipment must be clean and free of pollutants.
♦ Bags, cover nets, and/or trays used in the culture operation shall be removed from the water during all mechanical cleaning, maintenance and repair operations.
  ⇒ During harvest, culture bags and cover nets shall be rinsed/cleaned over the growout area to allow sediments to remain in the lease area.
  ⇒ Mechanical or hydraulic devices shall not be used below the water for the cleaning of submerged structures.
  ⇒ Use hand tools for cleaning shellfish, bags and other structures under water.
♦ The aquaculturist must remove all equipment, structures and improvements from the lease within 60 days following the date of expiration or termination of the lease.
Importing Aquaculture Seed or Stocks from Out-of-State

Note: These rules apply to shellfish seed or stocks intended for aquaculture purposes, not shellfish imported following processing for commercial sale.

All shellfish seed or stock intended for aquaculture imported from out-of-state must be accompanied by the following documentation:

1) **Diagnostic results**, from an accredited laboratory, that identify the pathology test performed, test results and the dates of such testing

2) A valid **Official Certificate of Veterinary Inspection** (OCVI) made on an official form from the animal’s state of origin, issued and signed by a veterinarian licensed and accredited in the state of origin. An OCVI is valid for 30 days following issuance.

3) **Documentation of broodstock origin**

4) **Ploidy verification, if applicable** (i.e. triploid oyster stocks), that documents:
   - The methods utilized to create the triploids (i.e. tetraploid x diploid cross, heat shock or chemical induction)
   - The methods utilized to verify ploidy
   - Ploidy test results from a representative sample of the stock

5) Diagnostic results and the OCVI must show that no evidence of the following pathogens were detected:
   - Quahog Parasite Unknown (QPX) in clams
   - *Haplosporidium nelsoni* (MSX), *Perkinsus marinus* (Dermo) and *Bonamia exitiosa* in oysters
   - Additional pathogens as identified by the State Veterinarian, USDA APHIS Veterinary Services or the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) list may require additional testing.

When Purchasing Shellfish Seed or Gametes From an Out-of-state Hatchery:

1) Request an OCVI and diagnostic results on the shellfish stocks you wish to import into Florida. Each hatchery should be working closely with a licensed veterinarian that can provide diagnostic services and an OCVI.

2) OCVIs and diagnostic results must be provided to the Division before shipment for approval via email at Aquaculture_Web@FDACS.gov.

3) After receiving written/email approval from the Division, the order may be imported into Florida.

4) **At time of delivery, request an invoice and copies of documentation** from the seller detailing the following information:
   - Date of entry/receipt
   - Date of shipment
   - Name and address of seller
   - Name and address of buyer
   - Buyer’s AQ Certificate number
   - Species
   - Total number and average size of animals
   - Ploidy results (if applicable, i.e. triploid seed)
   - Copy of diagnostic test results
   - Copy of OCVI
   - Broodstock origin documentation

5) After receiving the order, maintain all health records and receipts on file for a minimum of two years. Records must be available for inspection by the Division upon request.
Harvest Vessel Sanitation

Vessels must be registered and comply with U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) vessel requirements:

- A marine sanitation device
- Clearly displayed registration number and decal
- A vessel certificate of registration onboard
- USCG approved flotation device for each person onboard
- A marine-use fire extinguisher
- A sound producing device
- 3 daytime/nighttime signals
- Boats longer than 16-feet must also have a USCG-approved throwable flotation device

Vessels must be constructed and maintained to also protect shellfish from contamination:

- All boats must have false bottoms and fore and aft bulkheads to prevent shellfish from coming in contact with any bilge water, fuel or other contaminants.
- No dogs or other animals are allowed on the boat at any time.
- Boats must have a portable toilet or other sewage disposal receptacle with a tight fitting lid that will not spill onboard.
- Shellfish must be covered/shaded with burlap, an awning or other breathable material which prevents direct sunlight, allows air circulation and promotes evaporative cooling. **Plastic tarps are not allowed.**

Please contact the Division at Aqua_PPCIP@FDACS.gov if you have any questions regarding shellfish harvesting, processing or sales requirements.

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**Harvesting and Transporting Farmed Shellfish**

Aquacultured shellfish must adhere to the same sanitary harvesting and handling requirements as wild harvested shellfish. **No wild shellfish can be relayed to a lease under any circumstances. Shellfish must be:**

- Harvested from open shellfish harvesting areas (see page 3).
- Properly identified with a completed aquaculture tag at all times following harvest. Tags must be attached to shellfish containers while on the water during harvest in all circumstances.
- Graded, tumbled and/or cleaned over the lease area or delivered to and received by a certified shellfish processor for cleaning by that processor. Refer to page 6 for information about replanting shellfish following cleaning.
- Delivered directly to a certified shellfish processing facility by the time listed in the Refrigeration Requirements table below during the same day as harvest.

**Refrigeration Requirements for Shellfish at a Certified Dealer**

Refrigeration/cooling of shellfish after harvest is critical for reducing pathogen growth and protecting consumer health. **Shellfish must be delivered to a certified processor the same day as harvest.** Rapid delivery and cooling of product is critical during *Vibrio* control months (April through October). Shellfish must be received and refrigerated in a cooler that is at or below 45°F by a certified processor based on the time specified in table below.

### Oysters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Traditional Cooling</th>
<th>Rapid Cooling</th>
<th>Onboard Cooling with Ice Slurry</th>
<th>Restricted Use Only (Green Tag)</th>
<th>Delivery to Processor (1st day of harvest)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>10:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>10:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>10:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>10:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>10:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>11:00 a.m.</td>
<td>12:00 p.m.</td>
<td>4:00 p.m.</td>
<td>4:00 p.m.</td>
<td>12 Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Not permitted</td>
<td>11:00 a.m.</td>
<td>3:00 p.m.</td>
<td>3:00 p.m.</td>
<td>12 Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Not permitted</td>
<td>11:00 a.m.</td>
<td>3:00 p.m.</td>
<td>3:00 p.m.</td>
<td>10 Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Not permitted</td>
<td>11:00 a.m.</td>
<td>3:00 p.m.</td>
<td>3:00 p.m.</td>
<td>10 Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Not permitted</td>
<td>11:00 a.m.</td>
<td>3:00 p.m.</td>
<td>3:00 p.m.</td>
<td>10 Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Not permitted</td>
<td>11:00 a.m.</td>
<td>3:00 p.m.</td>
<td>3:00 p.m.</td>
<td>10 Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>11:00 a.m.</td>
<td>12:00 p.m.</td>
<td>3:00 p.m.</td>
<td>3:00 p.m.</td>
<td>12 Hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) **Traditional Cooling** (Oct-April): Oysters must be in the cooler of a certified facility by time specified the day of harvest and product must be at or below 55°F in 8 hours.
2) **Rapid Cooling**: Oysters must be in the cooler of a certified facility by time specified the same day of harvest and product must be at or below 55°F in 2 hours.
3) **Onboard Cooling with Ice Slurry**: Oysters cooled on boat with ice slurry dip within 1 hour of harvest and stored under mechanical refrigeration or in a cooler surrounded by ice. Oysters must be in the cooler of a certified facility by the time specified.
4) **Restricted Use (green tag)**: Oysters that do not meet the Rapid Cool or Onboard Cooling requirements must be tagged for shucking only by a certified dealer or for Post Harvest Processing (PHP) only.

Information concerning shellfish processing can be found on the Division’s website at: www.FDACS.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Aquaculture/Shellfish-Processing-Facility-Certification

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Bacterial growth at various temperatures
Aquaculture Bulk Tags

Shellfish Harvest Tags must be affixed to all harvested shellfish. The tag must be waterproof, 5½-inch by 2½-inch minimum size and follow the requirements of 5L-1.007 F.A.C. For more information about all shellfish tag types, see the Shellfish Tagging Requirements fact sheet. Bulk Aquaculture Tags (pictured above) are similar to typical harvester tags, but indicate that all shellfish were harvested from the same aquaculture lease on the same day and the specific processor to which the product will be delivered.

Tags must list all of the following information:

- Leaseholder or Authorized User’s Aquaculture Certificate of Registration number (AQ#), even if the product is being transported by an employee. Saltwater product license numbers (SPL#) cannot be listed on tags for aquacultured shellfish.
- Shellfish Harvesting Area number (four digit code).
- The specific lease (00-AQ-000) or parcel (X-000) number where the product was harvested.
- Date and time of harvest (when the first shellfish was removed from the water for that specific lot or container).
- Type (oysters or clams) and quantity of shellfish.
- Certified shellfish processor number that the product was consigned/sold to.
- Time and type of refrigeration, if applicable.
- The following statement: “All shellfish containers in this lot have the same date and area of harvest.”

Retail Sale of Aquaculture Products

All farmed shellfish must be received and processed by a certified shellfish processing facility. Once processed and re-tagged with a processor tag that includes the AQ#, aquaculturists can then buy back their shellfish and sell directly to retail establishments, such as seafood markets, restaurants and individual consumers. See Retail Sales of Farmed Shellfish for more details about sales and record requirements.

If you plan to sell farmed shellfish by setting up a tent, catering business, food truck, farmers market booth or similar outlet, additional licenses are required. For permit and licensing information related to retail sales of raw seafood at farmers markets, roadside stands, etc., contact the Division of Food Safety at (850) 245-5520 or Foodinsp@FDACS.gov and visit www.FDACS.gov/Business-Services/Food-Establishments/Mobile-Food-Vendors. For permit and licensing information related to retail sales at temporary events such as festivals, football games, etc., or retail sales of prepared or cooked seafood, contact the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, Division of Hotel and Restaurants at (850) 487-1395 or DHR.info@MyFloridaLicense.com.
Shellfish Aquaculture Research and Extension Program

An integral part of the University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), the Shellfish Aquaculture Research and Extension Program is a university-based program that supports integrated research, education and extension to develop, sustain and enhance economic opportunities for the shellfish aquaculture industry in Florida.

UF/IFAS taps into the expertise of scientists of various disciplines located at the university’s 20 departments and schools. The statewide UF/IFAS extension specialists lead highly relevant programs including seafood safety, aquaculture economics and business management, invertebrate physiology and ecology, shellfish reproduction, soil and water sciences, and more. Our extension, education and outreach programs are done in partnership with UF/IFAS Extension, Florida Sea Grant and coastal counties of Florida.

The Shellfish Extension webpage (www.Shellfish.IFAS.UFL.edu/) has a huge variety of Florida specific shellfish aquaculture information, publications and videos available to assist farmers with all aspects of shellfish aquaculture.

You can also contact UF/IFAS Shellfish Extension at (352) 543-5057.

The online resource webpage for Florida shellfish aquaculture serves as a one-stop-shop of technical assistance for your shellfish farm including:

- Fact Sheets and How-to Guides
- Financial and Risk Considerations
- Applied Research Projects
- Supplier Lists for Gear and Seed
- Workshop Videos
- Up-to-Date News

Aquaculture Tax Exemptions

As an aquaculture farm, possessing a valid Aquaculture Certificate of Registration, you qualify for many of the same agricultural tax exemptions offered to other forms of agriculture. Many common items, such as boats, trailers, motors, gas, diesel, generators, feed, electricity, pumps and more, are exempt from sales tax in Florida. For more information and to download purchaser exemption certificates, see the Aquaculture Tax Exemptions fact sheet or visit Florida Farm Bureau’s tax exemption website at: www.FloridaFarmBureau.org/agricultural-sales-tax-exemptions-in-florida/.
Additional Resources

The Division has a variety of publications that may be useful to you as a shellfish farmer. All of these fact sheets can be accessed via the Division’s webpage at: www.FDACS.gov/About-Us/Publications/Aquaculture-Publications
You can also contact the Division to have hard copies mailed to you free of charge.

Fact Sheets
- List of Certified Hatcheries and Nurseries
- Shellfish Aquaculture Gear Management
- Hurricane Preparation and Recovery Information
- Aquaculture Technical Assistance Contacts
- Guide to Importing and Exporting Aquaculture Products
- Guide to Shellfish Net Coatings
- Overview of Division’s Red Tide Management Program
- Aquaculture Business Resources Webpage

Oyster Aquaculture Workshop DVDs
The Division, in partnership with UF/IFAS and others, has created a series of video recordings from workshops over the past several years. Various topics are covered, including gear management methods, product marketing and hurricane preparation and recovery strategies. Contact the Division for a copy of the series.

Crop Insurance
As a relatively new agriculture crop, private shellfish insurance policies can be difficult to locate and cost prohibitive to acquire. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency offers a disaster insurance option for both oysters and clams, the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP). NAP insurance provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops to protect against natural disasters that result in lower yields, crop losses or prevents crop planting. Basic NAP coverage is affordable and can provide needed financial assistance if your crop is lost due to a severe weather event or other disaster.

Contact your local Farm Service Agency office for details and to apply for a NAP policy. The state office can be reached at (352) 379-4500.

Financial and Business Consulting
The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) can provide free one-on-one business consulting and training to assist your farm with a variety of topics including loan access, state and federal financial resources and marketing plans. As Florida’s principle provider of business assistance, SBDC is here to ensure the viability of Florida’s farm businesses while meeting the challenges of tomorrow.

Visit the Florida SBDC webpage or call (866) 737-7232 for more information.
Division of Aquaculture Contact Information

Tallahassee Office (Headquarters): (850) 617-7600
Melbourne Office: (321) 984-4890
Port Charlotte Office: (941) 613-0954
Cedar Key Office: (352) 543-1084
Apalachicola Office: (850) 653-8317

For shellfish leases questions, contact the Tallahassee office.
For shellfish tagging and processing facility questions, contact the Tallahassee office.
For shellfish harvesting area questions, contact your closest regional office.

Reporting Illegal Activities

Wild Seafood Harvest Information
The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is responsible for enforcement of shellfish regulations. Information on licenses required to engage in commercial harvest, harvest seasons, and gear or bag limits may be obtained from FWC offices. View specific FWC requirements for commercial oyster harvesting.