



MAINE COAST  
FISHERMEN'S  
ASSOCIATION



MAINE  
Lobstermen's  
Association  
[www.maine lobstermen.org](http://www.maine lobstermen.org)



The  
Maine  
Aquaculture  
Association

MLDA  
MAINE LOBSTER DEALERS' ASSOCIATION



MAINE COAST  
COMMUNITY  
SECTOR

March 20, 2020

Dear Senator Collins, Senator King, Representative Pingree, and Representative Golden,

As Congress continues the process of developing a stimulus package to address the Covid-19 pandemic and economic disaster, Maine's seafood industry has prioritized a list of economic responses for you to consider for inclusion. Maine's independent fishermen, harvesters, aquaculturalists, shoreside and supply chain businesses are being dramatically impacted by this disaster and we need both short-term economic relief and long-term investment to protect, promote, and preserve Maine's iconic seafood industry and the working waterfront that supports us.

Maine Department of Marine Resources' preliminary figures estimate the ex-vessel value of Maine's 2019 seafood landings at \$674 million. These landings are the economic lifeline for our coastal communities supporting a billion-dollar supply chain and thousands of ancillary businesses.

Over the past week, seafood prices have dropped by over 50% for many of our products and in many cases the market has outright disappeared. Where there are markets left, costs are outweighing revenue and it is no longer financially viable for many to continue to operate. For many others, there is simply nowhere to sell product. We are fortunate that March is a slow time for many in the seafood industry, but this disaster is looking to have a long tail and we must start setting our small businesses up for protection now if we wish to survive what is to come. We must assure that our seafood businesses remain solvent during this disaster and able to enter the market when it rebounds.

As such, here are a list of recommendations to help support the survival of Maine's seafood industry and associated infrastructure and working waterfronts.

#### **Access to assistance for seafood businesses**

- We must ensure that fishermen, aquaculturalists and shoreside seafood businesses are able to access the direct financial relief, loan and other programs being set up for small businesses, agriculture, and the food system. These programs must have the flexibility to assist a diversity of small, medium and large businesses comprised of corporations and self-employed persons.
- Changes should be made to fishery disaster program language to ensure an economic disaster due to a pandemic is an allowed rationale to declare a disaster, the aquaculture industry is included and the threshold to qualify is lowered.

#### **Rapid relief for seafood businesses, sole proprietorships, contractors and employees**

Maine seafood businesses on the water and on shore need direct financial assistance immediately and over the long-term to make it through the current crash and the lasting impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. From producer to point of sale, the seafood and supply chain



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needs an influx of capital. Access to short-term cash flow is critical to prevent businesses from going out of business before the market recovers.

- Develop no-interest operating loans, and loan deferment programs to allow Maine's seafood businesses to pay ongoing expenses and to keep employees and contractors paid.
- Develop personal and business tax relief to provide relief and redirect cash flow to the most pressing needs of the business
- Create subsidies and direct financial assistance to provide access to short-term cash flow to prevent businesses from going under before the market recovers.
- Develop insurance relief programs to help offset the costs of insurance on working waterfront infrastructure, boats, businesses, and to stabilize supply chain business.

### **Steps to stabilize Maine's economy and protect Maine jobs**

- Create an infrastructure investment loan and grant program to fund shovel-ready projects on the working waterfront.
- Declare seafood workers as Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers to keep seafood moving through our food system.
- Support the foodservice and restaurant sectors that serve Maine's fantastic seafood. More than 80% of seafood reaches consumers through food service. We must support the entire food system to ensure a swift rebound once the threat of this virus has passed.

Thank you for your vigilance in working to ensure that Maine's seafood industry remains solvent. We look forward to working with you over the coming weeks to build a successful plan for implementing these concepts for Maine's working waterfront and seafood community.

Maine Coast Fishermen's Association

Maine Lobstermen's Association

*Sebastian Belle*

Maine Aquaculture Association

Maine Lobster Dealers' Association

Maine Coast Community Groundfish Sector