

EXTENSION AND OUTREACH AT THE ALABAMA FISH FARMING CENTER



AUBURN
UNIVERSITY



Sunni Dahl^{1,2*}, Luke A. Roy^{1,2}, Anita M. Kelly^{1,2}

¹Alabama Fish Farming Center, Greensboro, Alabama

²School of Fisheries, Aquaculture & Aquatic Sciences,
Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama



ALABAMA FISH FARMING CENTER



FOUNDED: 1982

Greensboro, Alabama
Hub of west Alabama aquaculture



WHAT WE PROVIDE

- Aquatic Animal Diagnostics
- Water Quality Testing
- Applied Research & Field Station



WHO WE SERVE

- Catfish & Hybrid Catfish Farms
- Crawfish & Shrimp Producers
- Sportfish & Tilapia Operations
- Processors & Feed Mills
- State & Federal Agencies



EDUCATION & OUTREACH

A Statewide Connector Delivering

- Science-Based Guidance
- Rapid Diagnostics
- Producer Support

HISTORY OF AQUACULTURE IN WEST ALABAMA



1960s INDUSTRY BEGINS

Catfish farming emerges in the state



1980s CRAWFISH FARMING INTRODUCED

Red swamp crawfish culture starts



2003 PRODUCTION PEAKS & DECLINES

200+ catfish farms at peak



TODAY CURRENT INDUSTRY

14,000 acres in production

EXTENSION AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES



WATER QUALITY & DIAGNOSTICS



- Water quality and diagnostic services are provided free of charge
- Farmers can drop off samples Monday – Friday from 8 AM – 4:30 PM
- Aquatic algae and nuisance weed identification

CAREER DAYS



- Approximately 4,000 high school students yearly
- Students speak with industry leaders from west Alabama to explore potential career paths
- Demonstration including tent, games, and electroshocking boat
- Talk to students about careers in natural fisheries and aquaculture

CAREER FAIR



- Career Fair for local schools
- Students and other professional community members
- Information on aquaculture provided

EMERGENCY LIVESTOCK ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (ELAP)



- 10 temperature monitors deployed on commercial farms throughout west Alabama
- Reports of extreme temperatures when needed for ELAP assistance

MOBILE LAB



- RV retrofitted into small lab
- Equipped with water quality supplies, agars, nets, most necessary lab materials, etc.
- Convenience for producers and creates an onsite lab for disease diagnostics

CATFISH FARM FIELD DAYS



- Local catfish farm has a pumpkin patch
- Catfish tank demonstration with viewing window
- Elementary students learn about catfish farming
- Approximately 1,300 students yearly

TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO LOCAL SCHOOLS



- Aquaponics systems built at local high school
- Project teaches students how to operate the system, troubleshoot issues and grow their own vegetables in their environmental science class

FARM SAFETY EDUCATION & TOURS



- Farm safety presentation at AFFC
- Tour to local producer's cattle and catfish farm
- Nursing students learn the dangers of farming and get to see farming risks first-hand

CONCLUSION

The Alabama Fish Farming Center continues to advance aquaculture in Alabama by:

- **Educating communities** about the importance of commercial aquaculture
- **Providing essential diagnostic and water-quality services**
- **Partnering with Extension programs** to expand producer and student support
- **Conducting applied research** that benefits local farms

Our outreach activities, from school career fairs to community demonstrations, connect people of all ages with the catfish industry, Auburn University programs, and workforce opportunities.

By sharing knowledge and promoting Alabama's farm-raised catfish, we strengthen both local communities and the aquaculture sector.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Alabama Catfish Farmers, University of Alabama, Birmingham, ACES 4-H, West Alabama Schools