

California Aquaculture Association (CAA) assessment of COVID impacts to California aquaculture industry as of 3/27/2020

California aquaculture largely depends upon domestic live market demand and the sales of fish for food, bait, sportfish, or other fish for recreational fishing, aquariums, and water gardens, or biological control of nuisance aquatic plants.

On March 19, 2020, the California Aquaculture Association (CAA) sent an online survey to the association's membership to better understand the effects of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the aquaculture industry in California.

Below are the results of the survey as of the date at the header of this statement:

- 91% of respondents indicated that they have been significantly impacted by COVID-19.
- Of the respondents impacted, business sales declines range from 50% to 95%.
 - With regard to food fish sales: Live fish sales, specialty sales (e.g. caviar), and shellfish sales have all declined significantly due to the drop of demand (restaurant closures, etc.).
 - With regard to non-food fish sales: Sportfish and baitfish stocking orders have declined as current guidance is advising consumers to curtail discretionary retail shopping; imports of sport fish and baitfish may be halted; transport permits and associated inspections may be delayed; financial burdens will slow expenditures in non-essential activities such as recreation.
- Of the respondents not impacted, sales have remained stable due to grocery store demand.
- Of those who provided information about staffing, 100% of part time workers have been laid off and full-time workers' hours have been reduced by an average of 50%.
- With regard to their businesses, respondents indicated significant uncertainty about the future of their business and their ability to take care of their employees.
- With regard to their personal lives, respondents indicated a significant increase in levels of stress, uncertainty of retirement investments, and uncertainty of current financial positions.
- As insurance coverages include a "viral exclusion", one respondent recommended that coverages be amended and required to cover such disasters as the COVID-19 pandemic.
- With regard to the future, respondents indicated:
 - A need to improve food security and depend less on imported seafood.
 - A need to streamline regulations so that more seafood can be grown in California.
 - A need for grants and low interest loans to survive current conditions.

Additionally, CAA members are reporting that costs continue to accrue as fish need to be fed, farms must be maintained, and operations must continue to ensure animal health and care. Costs such as labor, water, energy, and oxygen will increase to hold live fish at higher densities when harvests are delayed. The longer aquatic animals are held prior to harvest, the greater is the probability of disease and mortality.

The CAA is representative of companies that are heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The entire industry, from business owners to employees, will likely need assistance to survive this trying time.

Please contact CAA Executive Director, Michael Lee at info@caaquaculture.org or (916) 246-6349 with any questions.