**NFI Comments re Seafood AMS Loans and Grants**

**18 March**

1. National Fisheries Institute. Appreciate this USDA outreach.
2. Seafood is part of the food system. Resource regulated by NOAA. Food safety largely regulated by FDA. But USDA has access to food distribution system, and seafood appreciates that Congress and now USDA has focused on including us in that system.
3. Retail is 30% sales. Restaurant 70% of sales. Restaurant sales plummeted during lockdowns and partial openings. Those closures whacked us.
4. Trade policies and COVID severely impacted US exports, which range from 40-60% of catch.
5. Fish vessels and seafood plants are often small towns – these towns are 70 x 20 fishing boats where men and women work together, live together, and relax together – with little opportunity for distancing.
6. To protect workers, boat owners and seafood processors expended costs on quarantine, screening and testing, PPE, re-engineering machinery and workflows to create spacing. Costs were in the collective hundreds of millions of dollars.
7. Past government support has been mixed:
	1. NOAA Section 12005: Too small a number for the full supply chain and NOAA was way too slow in fund distribution
	2. PPP: Did not work for all, especially with limits on size and a focus on lost revenue ….. rather than recognizing increased costs for COVID protection
	3. STRP: Mixed record. Worked very well for some harvesters, but limits prevented many seafood companies from participating. Actual exporters were not helped at all.
	4. Food Box was rushed out: Seafood essentially shut out, as USDA specs did not reflect seafood reality and the box assemblers having no seafood experience.
8. Seven items where USDA can help, specifically:
	1. Move the funds quickly, as USDA is expert at
	2. Be fair to seafood, as now twice directed by Congress
	3. Be inclusive: Include in grants and loans and purchases large and small seafood facilities – all sizes of companies incurred huge costs in protecting workers
	4. Implement a program of cost recovery for direct costs in protecting workers
	5. Support those that lost revenue by full inclusion of seafood in Food Box and like programs
	6. Fully support a Phase 2 STRP
	7. Designate a USDA POC that can translate seafood issue into USDA language, which is new to us