The Texas seafood industry is one of the most important in Texas coastal communities, contributing $2.5 billion annually to the state’s economy. Texas Sea Grant works closely with commercial fishermen and aquaculture businesses and supports research to help them overcome the potentially devastating effects of market factors like low-priced imports and maximize their profits, increase their sales and decrease their impacts on other species and the environment.

Helping Fishermen Market their Products as ‘Turtle Safe’

With funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Texas Sea Grant trained 440 shrimp vessel captains, crewmembers and owners how to properly install and use turtle excluder devices, or TEDs. When used correctly, these federally mandated devices are 97 percent effective in allowing endangered sea turtles to escape from shrimp trawl nets. Shrimp vessels in compliance are issued an inspection form, giving fishermen access to the growing number of markets and consumers who actively seek sustainably harvested products.

Promoting Texas Shrimp

To increase demand for Texas wild-caught shrimp, Texas Sea Grant partnered with the Texas Department of Agriculture and the Texas Shrimp Association to hold workshops for two of the largest supermarket chains in Texas. Seafood managers and promotions staff learned about shrimp nutrition, ecology, handling safety, fishery economics, and the chemistry underlying the flavor differences between farmed and wild shrimp so they can better answer consumers’ questions about Texas shrimp and promote its uniqueness.

Streamlining Certification for New Shrimp Fishing Equipment

With funding from a NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service grant, Texas Sea Grant tested new designs for devices that reduce the capture of other species during shrimp trawling. Federal law mandates the use of these bycatch reduction devices, but they also allow shrimp to escape the nets, in some cases reducing the catch by 10 percent or more. New designs can be certified for use only after lengthy and expensive government testing. Texas Sea Grant’s proof-of-concept testing is helping expedite the federal certification process to make the new designs available to fishermen more quickly.

Revolutionizing Shrimp Aquaculture

Texas Sea Grant funded the creation of an operations manual and training program by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and Research for a revolutionary new technique to culture Pacific white shrimp in indoor facilities year-round instead of in outdoor ponds that need to be closed in the winter months. The new system practically eliminates effluent pollution, protects the shrimp from viral infections and increases production.

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