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USDA Announces Plans to Purchase Surplus Catfish Products

LITTLE ROCK, AR – On Friday, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced plans to purchase surplus catfish products for distribution to various food nutrition assistance programs (find the original USDA announcement, [here](#).) These purchases are commonly referred to as Section 32 “Bonus Buys.” The purchases are not funded through taxpayer dollars but are instead funded through customs receipts collected by the U.S. Government from imported products. Learn more about Section 32 authority and programs, [here](#).

State Agriculture Department leadership from the major catfish producing states of Arkansas, Mississippi, Texas, Alabama, and Louisiana submitted a letter of support to Secretary Perdue regarding the request from the catfish industry for the USDA to purchase surplus catfish products through their Section 32 Authority. Find the letter of support, [here](#).

“Aquaculture and catfish production is an important segment of Arkansas agriculture,” says Arkansas Agriculture Secretary Wes Ward. “We appreciate Secretary Perdue’s support of this important industry and his understanding of the impact that this industry and its producers have on our state’s rural areas. This approval not only helps the industry but also helps to make sure that a healthy protein is available for food nutrition assistance programs.”

According to a recent Catfish Production Report from the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), Arkansas catfish producers had 10.3 million foodsize fish on January 1, 2018, up 61% from one year ago. Arkansas catfish growers had foodsize fish sales of \$18.1 million during 2017, up 7% from 2016.

The Arkansas Agriculture Department is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture and forestry to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation. Learn more: www.aad.arkansas.gov.

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