

COMMERCIAL BLUE CATFISH FISHING IN THE GULF OF MEXICO STATES

Blue catfish (*Ictalurus furcatus*) are North American freshwater catfish¹. They are also known as “white cat,” “white fulton,” “fulton,” “humpback blue,” “forktail cat,” and “blue channel catfish”². The species inhabits the U.S. (Mississippi River Basin and the Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf coastal slopes) and Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize^{1,2}. The first record of the species in the U.S. dates back to the Lewis and Clark Expedition². Blue catfish are native to 20 U.S. states and were introduced into many others to provide recreational fishing opportunities². Blue catfish prefer to live in deep, flowing water in medium to large rivers with mud, sand, and/or gravel bottoms¹. However, they may be stocked into reservoirs and may also tolerate moderate salinity levels such as those found in coastal waters².



Figure 1. Blue catfish (*Ictalurus furcatus*). Source: Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries. <https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/fish/blue-catfish/>. Last visited: November 30, 2018.

Blue catfish are the largest of the catfishes in the family *Ictaluridae*, and can reach a maximum length of 65 inches, a maximum weight of 150 pounds, and a maximum age of 21 years¹. They reach sexual maturity by approximately 4 – 7 years of age². In Louisiana, blue catfish spawn from April to June². Blue catfish are cavity nesters, seeking areas with minimal currents to deposit eggs².

Blue catfish grow quickly, reach large sizes, are easy to catch, and are tasty to eat; these traits make them a popular fish among hook-and-line anglers². Blue catfish support recreational fisheries in at least 7 states, and support both commercial and recreational fisheries in another 14 states².

Blue catfish are marketed fresh and frozen, and are eaten steamed, fried, broiled, and baked¹. In some southern and southeastern states, blue catfish are experiencing declines². These are attributed to a variety of factors, including habitat modification (e.g., stream channelization), increased turbidity, drainage of natural habitats, pollutants and pesticides, and construction of impoundments².

References:

¹ <http://www.fishbase.org/Summary/SpeciesSummary.php?ID=3019&AT=blue+catfish>

² https://www.fisheries.org/docs/pub_sympsampl.pdf

Recipe for Zesty Baked Catfish



Figure 2. This recipe is courtesy of [tasteofhome.com](https://www.tasteofhome.com). For ingredients and cooking instructions, please visit <https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/zesty-baked-catfish/>. Last visited: November 30, 2018.

Commercial Landings

The long-term annual commercial Blue catfish landings in the Gulf of Mexico states starting in 1990 are shown in Fig. 3. Since 2011, the Gulf supplied 57.8% of the total Blue catfish domestic landings (Fig. 4) averaging 3.6 million pounds and valued at \$1.8 million annually.

In 2016, Louisiana (45.7%) was the most significant supplier from the Gulf of Mexico with some landings from Texas (0.9%, Fig. 5). The rest of the Blue catfish was landed in Virginia (34.9%). Maryland landed 18.4%, and North Carolina added 0.2% to domestic landings.

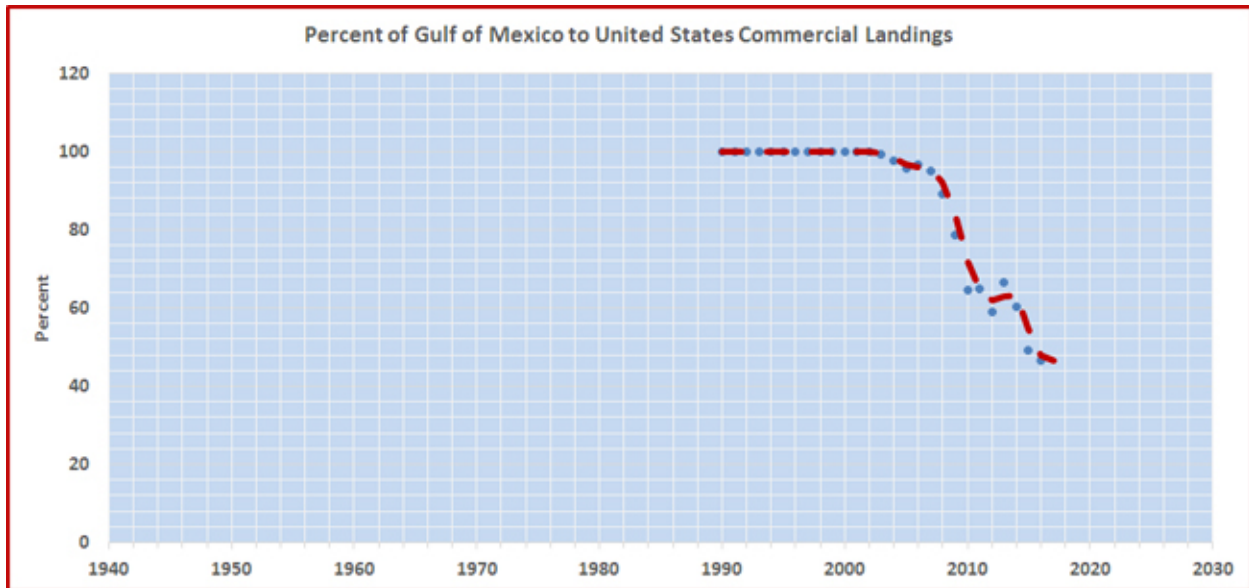


Figure 3. Commercial landings and dockside values of Blue catfish in the Gulf of Mexico region since 1990. The primary vertical axis shows the yearly commercial landings in pounds while the secondary vertical axis indicates the annual commercial dockside values in dollars. Source of raw data: NOAA Fisheries. <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/>. Last visited: November 30, 2018.

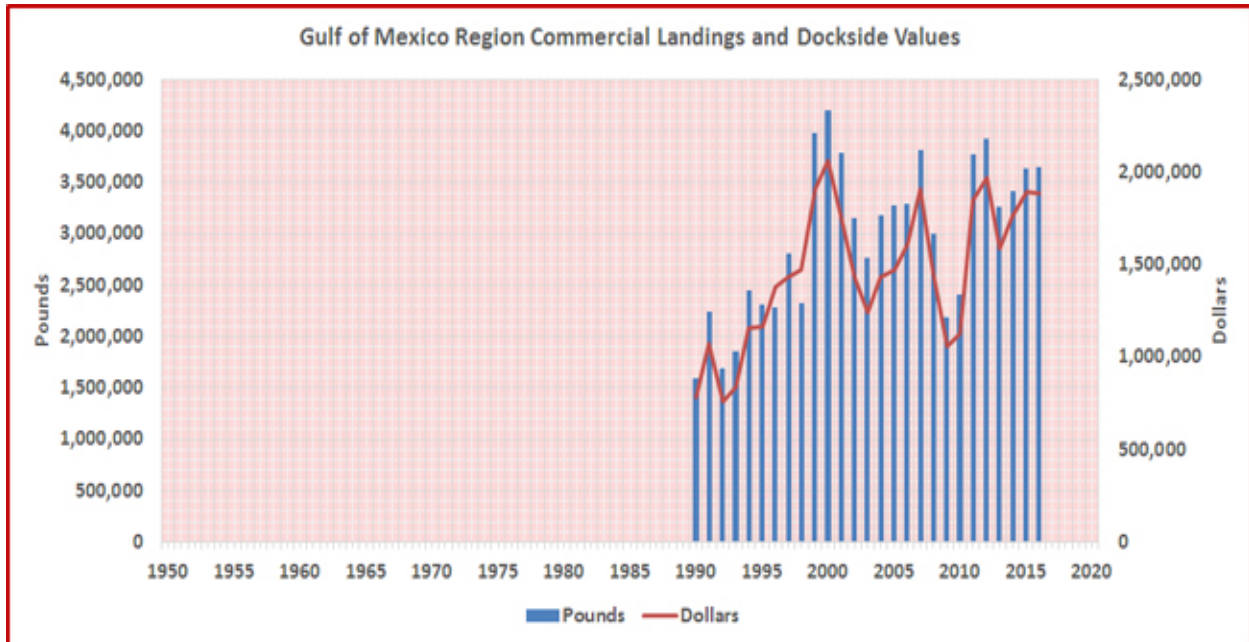


Figure 4. The vertical axis shows the percent of Gulf of Mexico to United States commercial landings of Blue catfish since 1990. Source of raw data: NOAA Fisheries. <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/>. Last visited: November 30, 2018.

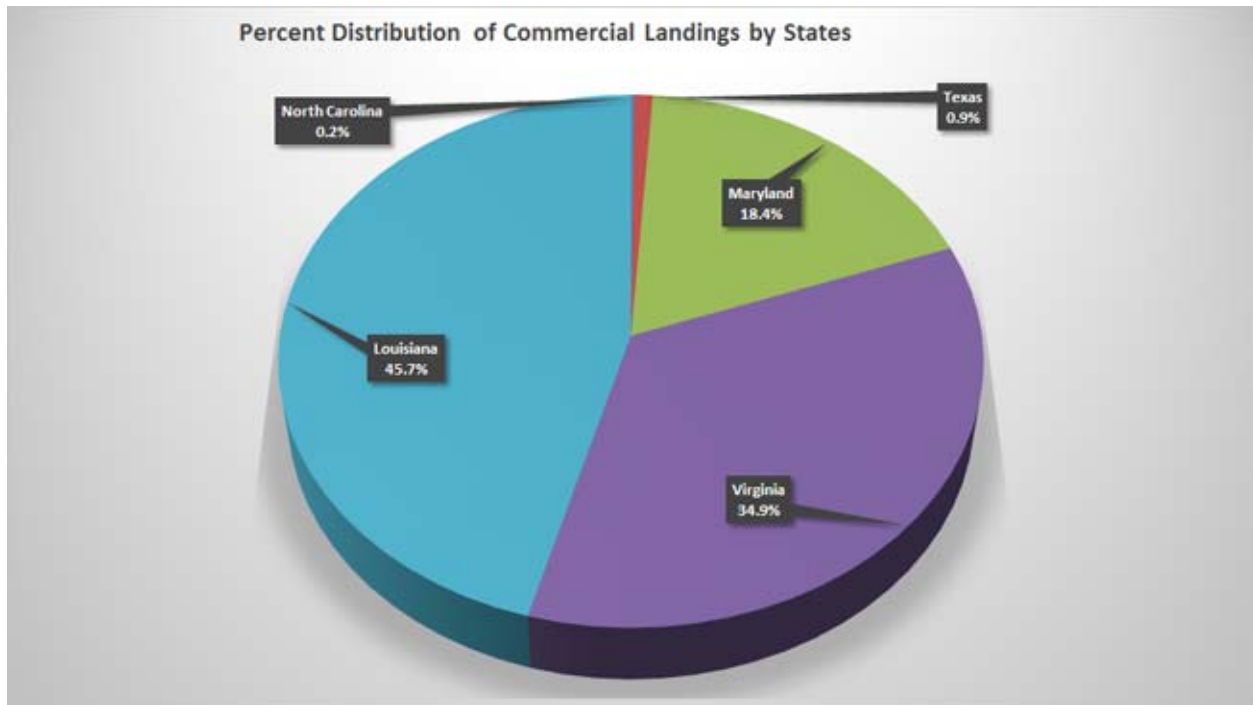


Figure 5. The pie chart shows the 2016 percent distribution of commercial landings of Blue catfish by producing states. Source of raw data: NOAA Fisheries. <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/>. Last visited: November 30, 2018.

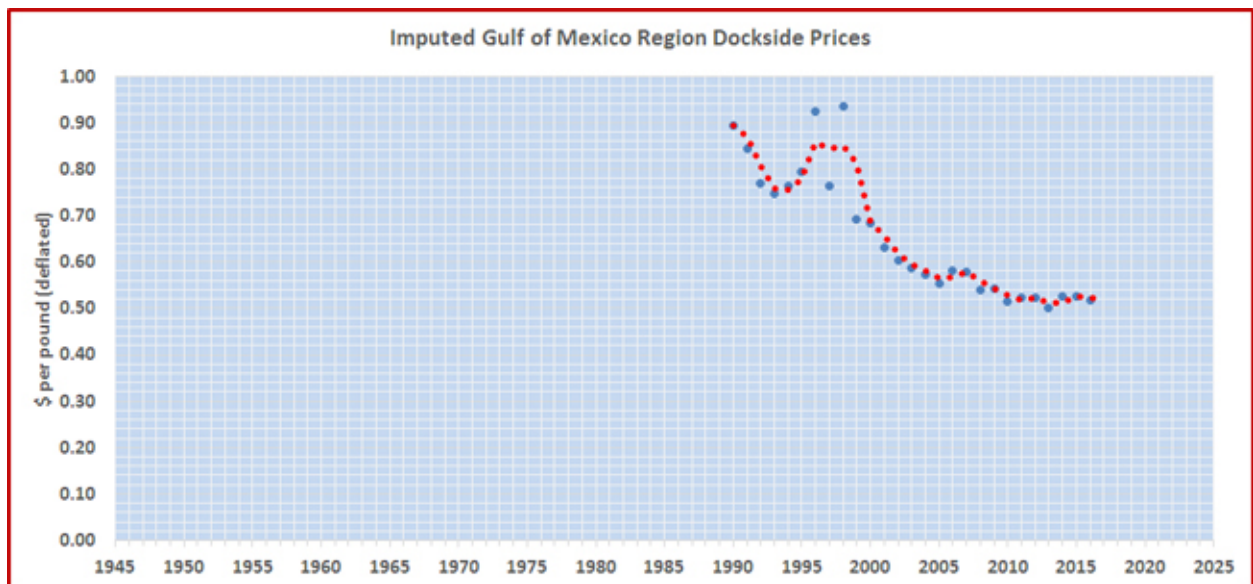


Figure 6. The vertical axis shows the average yearly dockside prices of Blue catfish since 1990 in dollars per pound. Source of raw data: NOAA Fisheries. <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/>. Last visited: November 30, 2018.

The dockside prices of Blue catfish in the Gulf of Mexico states averaged about \$0.52 per pound during the past six years (Fig. 6). The ex-vessel prices were deflated by the consumer price index (2016=100).

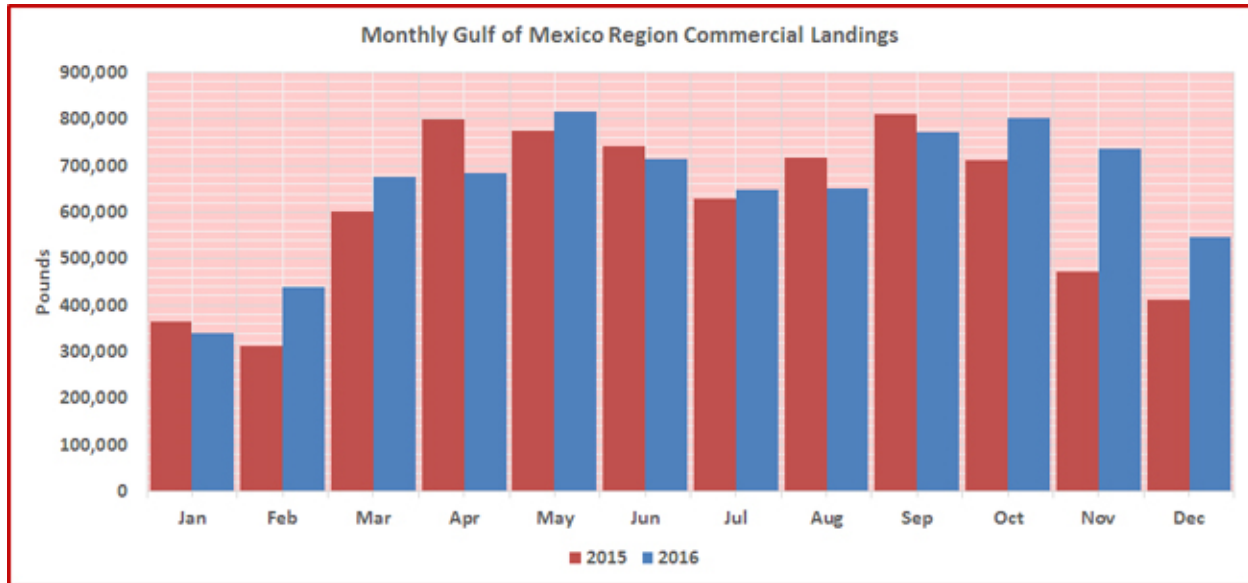


Figure 7. The vertical axis shows the monthly commercial landings of Blue catfish in pounds in 2015 and 2016. Source of raw data: NOAA Fisheries. <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/>. Last visited: November 30, 2018.

MarketMaker Seafood Businesses

In 2016, the Gulf-wide commercial landings of Blue catfish reached more than 3.7 million pounds with dockside values of \$1.9 million. Blue catfish are harvested year-round (Fig. 7). More than 12,000 businesses which catch, process, and sell seafood products are registered in MarketMaker nationwide. There are more than 200 businesses which promote their seafood products and services in Mississippi MarketMaker.

To search for seafood businesses in MarketMaker, perform the following procedures:

1. Go to <https://ms.foodmarketmaker.com/main/mmsearch/>
2. Click “search” and type “**Seafood**” in the product box.
3. You can sort the search results by relevance and name.
4. You can also limit online searches by state, and type of business.

Economic Contributions

The economic contribution that the commercial Blue catfish fishing makes region-wide is crucial information in making private investment decisions, formulating government policy, and

developing research and extension programs for the industry. The IMPLAN (<http://implan.com/>) software and the 2013 input-output data for the five Gulf States were used in creating the regional economic model of commercial fishing in the Gulf of Mexico in 2016. The economic analysis used sector 17 or commercial fishing of the 2013 IMPLAN input-output data.

The annual commercial dockside values of Blue catfish in the Gulf of Mexico states in 2016 reached \$1.9 million, which was 3.5% more than the average yearly dockside values in the region since 2011. The total output contribution of commercial Blue catfish fishing in 2016 amounted to \$3.7 million (Fig. 8). This output of goods and service created by the Blue catfish commercial fishing and related industries sustained 51 jobs and generated labor income amounting to \$1.3 million in the Gulf regional economy.

Economic contribution of commercial Blue Catfish fishing in the Gulf of Mexico region				
Impact Type	Employment (Jobs)	Labor Income (\$M)	Total Value Added (\$M)	Output (\$M)
Direct Effect	42	0.8	1.0	1.9
Indirect Effect	3	0.2	0.4	0.9
Induced Effect	6	0.3	0.6	0.9
Total Effect	51	1.3	2.0	3.7

Figure 8. The total economic contribution includes direct, indirect and induced effects estimated by using 2016 annual landing values and 2013 IMPLAN data. The local purchases percentage was set at 100%. The number of jobs is rounded off.

The Blue catfish commercial fishing industry generates annual tax revenues for the Gulf States and the U.S. federal government. It was projected that more than \$230,000 would have been paid by households and businesses in 2016 to the federal government as social insurance tax, tax on production and imports, corporate profit tax, and personal income tax. The Gulf States were anticipated to have collected taxes from households and businesses in 2016 amounting to more than \$112,000 in social insurance tax, tax on production and imports, corporate profits tax, and personal tax.

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