Inspectors Serve Five Roles

Services provided by USDC seafood inspectors are tailored to the inspection needs of the applicant. Generally, inspectors serve in the following roles as they perform their duties:

Sanitation advisor – cites and oversees corrections of sanitary and hygienic practices in the facility and with food handlers

Quality control monitor – observes condition and production of raw materials to final product to assure a wholesome and quality end product

Official certifier – samples and evaluates final product and certifies results

Observer – monitors the overall operations of the facility and personnel practices

Communicator – maintains open communication with plant management to resolve problems and produce premium products

"The Inspection Program, we believe, has enhanced sales of fresh and frozen seafood in our stores and strengthened our image among consumers as a company concerned with both quality and safety."

Derrick Penick
The Kroger Company

Being the largest importer of crustaceans in South Florida we clearly recognize that our success in achieving the quality level, sales and customer base that we enjoy is the direct result of hard work, diligence and a close working partnership with the USDC Seafood Inspection Program. We do not accept a product into our inventory until it passes inspection which ensures us favorable yields on the products we import, with savings passed on to the customer, and customers satisfied with the quality of the products we deliver. Customer confidence, good yields and a sound reputation are all company policies, and our use of the inspection service is an integral part of that process.

Henry Torres, President
Empire Seafoods and Empire Imports

For information, contact:

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Seafood Inspection Program

of the

U.S. Department of Commerce

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Seafood Inspection Program
Web site: seafood.nmfs.gov

Protection Through Inspection

The U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), provides a voluntary inspection service to the industry (under the authority of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946). The voluntary Seafood Inspection Program offers a variety of professional inspection services which assure compliance with all applicable food regulations. In addition, product quality evaluation, grading and certification services on a product lot basis are also provided. Benefits include the ability to apply official marks, such as the U.S. Grade A, Processed Under Federal Inspection (PUFI) and lot inspection marks.

The services provided by the Seafood Inspection Program include the following:

- Establishment / Vessel Sanitation Inspection
- Process and Product Inspection and Product Grading
- Product Lot Inspection
- Laboratory Analyses
- Training
- Consultation

These services can be provided nationwide, in U.S. territories, and with the exception of product certification in foreign countries, as well. All types of establishments such as vessels, processing plants, and retail facilities may receive these services. All edible product forms ranging from whole fish to formulated products, as well as fish meal products used for animal foods, are eligible for inspection and certification. The official government forms and certificates issued by USDC inspectors are legal documents recognized in any U.S. court.

OFFICIAL MARKS

Products inspected and certified under the USDC Seafood Inspection Program which meet all the requirements and criteria specified, can bear one or more of the official marks or statements associated with the program.

U.S. Grade A

The U.S. Grade A mark signifies that a product meets the highest level of quality established in the applicable U.S. grade standard and has been processed under the USDC voluntary Seafood Inspection Program in a sanitarily approved facility.

Processed Under Federal Inspection (PUFI)

The PUFI mark or statement signifies that the product is certified to be safe, wholesome and properly labeled, conforms to quality and other criteria in the approved specification, and has been officially inspected in a USDC sanitarily approved facility under Federal inspection.

Lot Inspection Mark

The USDC Lot Inspected mark identifies products that were officially sampled and inspected to conform to approved specification or criteria. This mark may be used on retail packages and packing provided the label and specification are approved.

Retail Mark

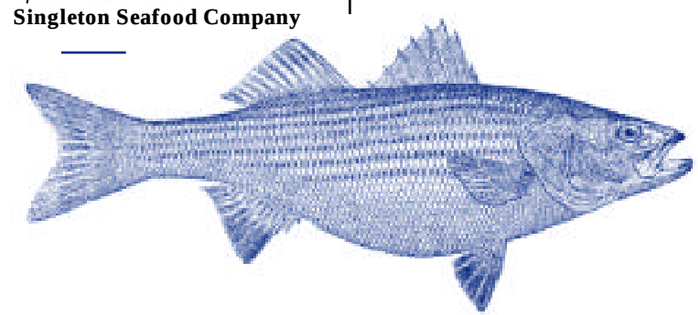
Participants qualify for use of the Retail Mark by receiving the USDC HACCP-based service or by contracting for sanitation services and associated product evaluation. Usage of such a mark gives retail firms the opportunity to advertise on banners, logos, or menus that their facility has been recognized by the USDC for proper sanitation and handling of fishery products.

HACCP Mark

The HACCP mark may be used alone or in conjunction with existing grade marks to distinguish that the product was produced under the HACCP-based program. Participants receive the marketing benefits of using the HACCP mark on brochures, banners, and company labels.

"… the current voluntary program has been a notable success and promotes domestic and foreign commerce in American seafood… It is our customers who perceive the value of the USDC mark…"

Singleton Seafood Company



Benefits

Seafood Inspection Program participants can realize several advantages which can:

Increase consumer confidence

Enhance product marketability

Attract military and other Federal, State, institutional, and retail buyers

Develop and improve quality control programs

Obtain certificates which are accepted in court as evidence of fact

Offer opportunities to market U.S. Grade A products

Develop processing specifications for non-standardized seafood products

Obtain certification for products destined for export