

West Coast Seafood Processors Association



The coronavirus pandemic severely disrupted the seafood supply chain in 2020 and will continue to cause problems through the 2021 primary fishing seasons. These disruptions are complex, and the repercussions are like dominoes: Knock one down and the next one falls. It will take years for the seafood industry to recover.

Specific Impacts to Seafood Processors



Virtual overnight closure of restaurants in March 2020 caused restaurant/food service demand to fall by more than 70 percent. Consumers are familiar with proteins such as chicken, pork and beef for takeout meals, but not nearly as much for seafood.



Shutdowns caused by the pandemic created unreliable demand, surplus or wasted product, trucking and logistical challenges, scheduling changes and significant problems retaining workers.



Many companies now have excess inventory, which increases costs (freezer storage) and can affect current markets and prices. Finding alternative markets is not easy. For example, some products may be unfamiliar or non-traditional to domestic consumers.



Our companies have taken enormous steps to protect our work force, spending millions of dollars on PPE, testing, quarantining and facility modifications to ensure social distancing. Some government assistance programs have led to labor shortages and further increased our costs.

Providing healthy, sustainable seafood to markets throughout the West Coast, the nation and the world

Impacts to Species and Fisheries



Dungeness crab

Dungeness crab fishermen and processors who sell live crab to China lost lucrative markets in January 2020 as China restricted the imports of live animals. Restrictions in China increased after the coronavirus was discovered at a market in Wuhan.



Sablefish

Sablefish, a high value species also called blackcod, also suffered from China/Asian restrictions on imported seafood products. Some companies, lacking export markets and facing depressed domestic demand, closed completely, leaving fishermen with no local buyer.



Chinook salmon

Domestic demand for Chinook salmon dropped as restaurant restrictions continued into spring and summer, when salmon seasons opened. Much of the salmon purchased in 2020 had to be frozen, increasing storage costs and affecting future prices.



Albacore tuna

Economic impacts impacted the albacore tuna fishery as the pandemic lasted through the summer and fall. Lower demand for seafood overall, plus higher unemployment due to COVID-19 restrictions, meant fewer local sales for some small buyers.

COVID-19 Assistance

To help offset losses to West Coast fishery participants caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government directed \$300 million in relief funds to fishermen and processors in 2020. A second round of funding is expected in 2021. In addition, some fishing companies—many of which are often multi-generational small businesses—received forgivable PPP loans from the CARES Act.

Sources: [NOAA Fisheries Initial Impacts Assessment of the COVID-19 Crisis on the U.S. Commercial Seafood and Recreational For-Hire/Charter Industries](#)
[NOAA Fisheries Updated Impact Assessment of the COVID-19 Crisis on the U.S. Commercial Seafood and Recreational For-Hire/Charter Industries](#)
[West Coast Fisheries Impacts from COVID-19](#)

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