
The Center for a Livable Future
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
111 Market Place, Suite 840
Baltimore, MD 21202

March 3, 2021

Melissa Yencho
Fisheries Biologist
NOAA Fisheries
U.S. Department of Commerce
1315 East West Hwy
SSMC-3 F/ST-1
RM 12626
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed herein are our own and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Johns Hopkins University.

Re: NFMS Fisheries of the United States Report: Opportunities for Future Improvement

Dear Ms. Yencho,

We are researchers at The Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, based at the Bloomberg School of Public Health in the Department of Environmental Health and Engineering. The Center engages in research, policy analysis, education, and other activities guided by an ecologic perspective that diet, food production, the environment, and public health are interwoven elements of a complex system.

The Center's Seafood, Public Health & Food Systems Project explores the complex relationships involving wild and farmed seafood supply chains and their global implications for public health, our environment and the depletion of natural resources. We use the Fisheries of the United States (FUS) report quite often — maybe 5 times per year — primarily as a reference for data points for particular subsectors. However, there are other models for these types of reports, and it would be useful for the FUS team to consider alternatives such as the biannual UN FAO State of the World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA).

We have three main suggestions for FUS:

1. **Embrace a diverse, equitable and multi-disciplinary process.** The FAO SOFIA report brings together expert input and analysis from many different teams within FAO, as well as external ghost writers and reviewers for subsections where particular technical expertise is required. This provides the latest science and allows for dynamic and comprehensive content. We would like to see FUS take a similar approach by broadening its scope and pulling in expertise from other parts of NOAA and outside experts across disciplines, institutions, scales (e.g., small-scale and subsistence fisheries and aquaculture), and stakeholder groups

(especially indigenous and BIPOC communities). We see a lot of potential for FUS to be the flagship report for NOAA Fisheries and Aquaculture with a little more work.

- 2. Increase use of data visualization.** SOFIA is narrative driven and supported by figures and a few tables. These figures are widely cited in countless reports and presentations by people around the world, and they set the agenda and conversation topics for countless users. We like that the FUS has started making infographics, but this is just scratching the surface of what could be done with visual presentation of the data. We would like to see the FUS report use graphs in place of tables wherever possible. All the data in the current FUS report need not be plotted — only the key data and new or interesting trends. The remaining data and tables could be provided in a database and via Excel files similar to USDA ERS ([see example link](#)).
- 3. Take a food systems, “fish as food” perspective.** The FUS report covers production, trade, supply and per capita availability, which is nominally a supply chain approach, but we think it could be done in a more purposeful way that explicitly talks about the food system. The strongest section of the report is production but taking a systems approach would also include unpacking how production relates to human dimensions like livelihoods, coastal communities, worker safety, waste and loss, food safety, sustainability, stock status, and ecosystem interactions. The trade and supply sections could be improved by taking a more rigorous approach to data analysis and modeling. For example, having an economist model trade and supply could produce some very interesting and usable graphs with interpretation. Lastly, the per capita section could be expanded with a “fish as food” focus and include data on seafood consumption using NHANES data. There are some amazing initiatives going on around fish-to-school programs, seafood donations to food banks, and direct-to-consumer sales, which could be highlighted in text boxes.

We would be happy to meet with you virtually to continue discussing the FUS report.

Sincerely,



David C. Love, PhD, MSPH

Associate Scientist, Department of Environmental Health & Engineering
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
Seafood, Public Health & Food Systems Project
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
Johns Hopkins University



Elizabeth Nussbaumer, MPP

Senior Staff, Department of Environmental Health & Engineering
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
Project Director, Seafood, Public Health & Food Systems Project
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
Johns Hopkins University