

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A NATIONAL SURVEY ABOUT SHRIMP PRODUCTION IN THE UNITED STATES

You are invited to participate in an important study about your experience in the shrimp farming industry. May we ask you to please review the information below and follow the instructions for accessing the survey in your preferred format?

A copy of the survey instrument is attached to this message. You may download and complete the survey, then return it via email to mara.merlino@kysu.edu.

Alternatively, you may click on this link to complete the survey online via Survey Monkey. If you are unable to complete the survey in one sitting, you will be allowed to exit the survey and return to it when you are ready to complete it: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/F39858T>

If you prefer to complete the survey by mail, telephone, or virtual meeting, please reach out to one of the people listed at the bottom of this message; they will accommodate your request.

If you have a preference, you may select the way you would like to participate either by clicking this link or using this QR code, which will take you directly to the survey:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/F39858T>



When you land on the Survey Monkey site you will be asked to read the information below about the study and your rights as a participant in our project. Then you can select how you prefer to complete the survey. Please don't hesitate to contact either Dr. Andrew Ray or Dr. Mara Merlino if you have any questions about the study. Your experience and opinions are important to the success of our research, and we look forward to receiving your response!

Study Title: Evaluation of the U.S. Shrimp Farming Industry – A Survey-Based Assessment

Kentucky State University invites you to participate in a research study of the United States shrimp farming industry. This study is being conducted by Dr. Andrew Ray, Associate Professor of Aquaculture Production, and Dr. Mara Merlino, Professor of Psychology and Sociology, of Kentucky State University (KSU), with funding from the USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, National Animal Health Monitoring System. We ask that you read this information and ask any questions you may have before

agreeing to participate in the study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to reach out to industry constituents directly and get their honest opinion on shrimp farming and ways the sector can improve. By connecting with farmers directly, we hope to build a thorough understanding of the industry, and in the end, build a network of communication, which can be used to continuously gather information on the changing challenges and opportunities for U.S. farmers.

The ultimate result of this project will be a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of the U.S. shrimp farming industry, what the major issues and restraints are for the industry, and what you, as a shrimp producer, believe to be major areas where research and extension efforts should be focused by entities such as higher education and government agencies. These results will be summarized for APHIS in a series of reports by KSU and will be shared more broadly through conference presentations, extension publications, and peer reviewed manuscripts; however, the identity of participants will never be shared.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria: You were selected to be invited to participate in our study because you have been identified as the owner or manager of a U.S.-based shrimp farm, shrimp broodstock producer, shrimp seed stock producer, or are currently building or developing any of these businesses. This includes entities working with marine shrimp, freshwater shrimp, RAS technology, pond technology, or any other U.S. shrimp-producing entity.

Study Information: The study will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. If you choose to participate you will be asked to complete a survey conducted by Kentucky State University (KSU). You may participate by completing the survey questionnaire in one of several formats:

1) *Email option:* You may print and fill out the questionnaire attached to this email, scan the completed survey, and return it to Dr. Merlino at mara.merlino@kysu.edu.

2) *Online via Survey Monkey:* You may click on the link or scan the QR code in this email to go directly to Survey Monkey and complete the survey online. If you would like to complete the survey online, then we recommend that you use a tablet, laptop, or desktop computer to improve readability. If you are unable to complete the entire survey at one time you will be allowed to exit and re-enter the survey.

3) *Mail option:* You may click on the link or QR code and request a hard copy of the survey via mail to the address you provide, which you may complete and return in the self-addressed stamped envelope we will provide.

4) *Telephone or virtual option:* You may click on the link or QR code and request a telephone interview that we will complete with you by appointment using the telephone contact information you provide. If you prefer to complete the survey with one of our telephone interviewers, then we will contact you using the information you provide us at the date and time you specify. Interviews will be scheduled on a first come, first served basis. If we are unable to complete the interview at your preferred appointment time, then we will contact you to find another day and time that would be convenient for you. Our interviewer will call you at that time. Please plan to spend approximately an hour to respond to the questions. It may take less time or more time to complete the interview, depending on the amount of detail you provide. The interviewer will be entering your responses into a computer during the

interview. If you are unable to complete the survey in one appointment, our interviewer will schedule a day and time for you to complete the interview.

Survey Content: We will be asking for your practices and opinions about a variety of topics, including:

- The characteristics of your operation;
- Your production systems and rearing practices;
- How you manage your broodstock and grow-out;
- Nutrition;
- Health monitoring, morbidity and mortality, and biosecurity of your animals;
- Water quality and resource management;
- Marketing;
- Perceived constraints along the production continuum, including permitting, growing, harvesting, processing, and marketing;
- Your information needs, and availability of and access to training and expertise; and
- Concerns about the future of your business and the shrimp industry.

Confidentiality: We recognize that confidentiality is of the utmost importance. We will take every precaution to ensure that your privacy is protected. After data collection is complete, your data will be assigned a unique tracking number and your personal information will be separated from your data. Your personal information will be stored in a locked area in a separate location from your data, and the PIs will control access to this information. No identifying information or information that may make it possible to discover the identity of the participants will be published.

Data will be reported only in aggregate form, and no direct quote will be used without prior permission from the participant. Access to your data will be restricted to study personnel, and for regulatory purposes to members of the Institutional Review Boards of KSU and USDA, or the Federal Office of Human Research Protection. It is necessary for these organizations to have access to your information so that they can follow up on any communications you may have with them concerning your participation in the study. To that extent, confidentiality is not absolute.

Risks and Benefits of Participating in the Study: There are no significant physical or mental risks for participating in this study. No invasive procedures or restraints will be employed during the research.

Compensation: You will not receive any monetary compensation for participating in this project.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with Kentucky State University. If you decide you no longer wish to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw at any time for any reason without affecting those relationships. In other words, you will not be penalized in any way for choosing not to participate or to withdraw. If you choose to withdraw, your data will be withdrawn from the study and destroyed, and your information will not be included in the data upon which future reports, publications, or presentations will be based.

Contacts and Questions: This study is being conducted by researchers under the supervision of:

PI: Andrew Ray, Ph.D.

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If you have questions about the project, we invite you to contact any of our project investigators. You may also contact the Office of Research, Grants, and Sponsored Programs at Kentucky State University at (502) 597-6684 if you have questions or concerns. All information regarding your inquiry will remain confidential.