

April 5, 2004

SHRIMP INDUSTRY INVENTORY: Progress report

To date the following tasks have been accomplished:

1. Site visits to all the 24 commercial docks in SC have been completed. Information on dock activities, business profiles and marketing channels from SC trawlers to docks to local retail/food services and to processors have been documented in working notes for a draft report.
2. Of the mail surveys sent to all licensed trawler owners to assess their level of shrimping activity in 2002 and 2003 as well as their plans for 2004, approximately 250 forms have been returned. Data entry is complete with detailed to analysis to follow. Summary results are provided in the report "Preliminary Findings of the 2003 South Carolina Shrimp Trawling Industry Survey." Findings indicate that:
 - About 55% of the trawlers are less than 50 feet; these boats shrimp about 70 days a year providing about 33% of the family income from shrimping.
 - Boats greater than 50 feet in length shrimp about 150 days a year providing 70 to 75% of family income on average; still, 38% of the boats provide 80% or more of household income.
 - 65% of the boats are over 20 years old.
 - To improve their finances, shrimpers top three priorities are: higher shrimp prices, reduced shrimp baiting, and more marketing/education programs.
3. Personal interviews with shrimpers or their bookkeepers have been completed for the costs and returns survey. These have been based primarily at Rut Leland's dock and in Shem Creek. We now have approximately 30 completed surveys that were obtained in personal interviews with shrimpers during February and March 2004. These cover both calendar years 2002 and 2003 and provide a solid database for understanding fixed and variable costs of operating a shrimp trawler and the profitability of these operations.
4. The spreadsheet format of the survey document allows for easy updating to 2004 data and "what-if" analysis as costs and prices vary. These data will be used to help assess the expected profitability of individual trawler operations as market conditions change for shrimp and inputs (fuel, ice, various materials and supplies and crew labor).
5. As shrimp prices received by shrimp trawler owners change in response to potential new tariffs or to market forces, the impacts on the profitability of individual trawlers and the viability of the SC shrimp fleet can now be estimated with confidence.

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