

Fisheries Improvement and Seafood Health (FISH) Act

Seafood is a significant source of protein worldwide, and the US seafood industry supports 1.2 million jobs and adds over \$70 billion to the nation's economy annually. The Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) is the nation's premier law governing the management and conservation of commercial and recreational fisheries in the US Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ; 3-200 nautical miles from shore). The MSA was last reauthorized and amended in 2006 to include requirements to stop overfishing, rebuild overfished stocks, and establish annual catch limits. Still, fish stocks face new pressures and stressors that were not considered when updating MSA 20 years ago.

While several efforts have been made to reauthorize MSA in recent years, finding consensus on a comprehensive reauthorization has been challenging. The work done by my predecessor, the late Rep. Don Young, and many of my colleagues on the Natural Resources Committee has resulted in several policies that make small changes to MSA and fisheries management and have had broad support.

The Fisheries Improvement and Seafood Health (FISH) Act draws on bipartisan provisions from previous fisheries bills. It does not seek to reauthorize the Magnuson-Stevens Act or make significant changes to the fishery management process. Instead, it aims to enhance and modernize fisheries policies through a targeted approach, fostering a bipartisan movement in support of sustainable fisheries.

The FISH Act would direct the GAO to conduct a study on US seafood competitiveness in international markets and assess Federal programs to support domestic seafood production. It would also create a Fisheries and Ecological Resilience program to help increase fisheries resilience through coordinated data collection, innovative management tools, and cross-agency and Fishery Management Council collaboration.

The US seafood industry is facing a crisis, with Russia and China flooding the market with cheap fish produced using forced labor and poor environmental standards. This has led to a global oversupply of seafood, driving down prices and making it difficult for US fishermen to sell their catch. The FISH Act will help us identify the weaknesses in our seafood supply chain and equip managers with the flexibility to respond to new pressures on fish stocks.