

Both State and local agencies have jurisdiction over the sale of fish directly to the end consumer. In addition to the state requirements below, businesses selling fish or shellfish must be inspected and obtain licensing and food worker permits from the local County Health Department. Contact your county health department for specific information.

This fact sheet includes:

- Washington State fish and shellfish licenses;
- selling at farmers markets;
- fish processing and HACCP; and
- aquatic farms.

## Washington State Fish and Shellfish Licenses

### Fish

A Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) license is required for any commercial enterprise to catch and sell fresh, raw fish.

The following licenses are available:

#### **Anadromous Fish Buyer/Dealer License**

Cost: \$180.00/year. Authorizes the purchasing or selling of steelhead, trout and other anadromous game fish harvested by treaty fishermen lawfully exercising fishing rights.

#### **Direct Retail Endorsement License**

Cost: \$50.00/year. Allows a fisherman to land and sell his or her catch or harvest in Washington State to anyone other than a licensed wholesale dealer. The fisher must have a salmon, crab or sturgeon license to be eligible for this endorsement.

#### **Fish Buyer License**

Cost: \$95.00/year. Authorizes the buying and selling of food fish and shellfish at wholesale by representative of a wholesale dealer.

#### **Wholesale Fish Dealer License**

Cost: \$250.00/year. Required for any Washington State business engaging in the commercial buying or processing of food fish or shellfish, including:

- custom canning and/or processing of personal use food fish or shellfish;
- wholesale buying and/or brokering of food fish or shellfish;
- commercial manufacturing or preparation of fertilizer, oil, meal, caviar, fish bait or other by-products from food fish or shellfish; and
- a business employing a fish buyer.

For applications or more information on these licenses contact Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife License Division at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/commercial>, or email [commercialsales@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:commercialsales@dfw.wa.gov), or call (360) 902-2464.

### Shellfish

A variety of shellfish are harvested in Washington's Puget Sound and coastal regions, including oysters, clams, mussels, geoduck, and scallops. These are filter feeders capable of concentrating chemicals, bacteria, viruses, or marine biotoxins. To protect consumers, commercial shellfish growing areas, certified harvest sites, and licensed processing facilities are monitored by the Washington State Department of Health (DOH).

Fishers and/or Shellfish farmers that harvest or sell molluscan shellfish (clams, oysters, mussels, and/or scallops) for human consumption are required to obtain a:

- Washington State Master Business License);
- Washington State Department of Health (DOH) Commercial Shellfish License; **and**
- Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) Aquatic Farmer Registration.

There are three major types of commercial shellfish operations licensed by DOH:

- harvesters who harvest shellstock (live, unshucked product) and sell only to other licensed Washington State shellfish dealers;
- shellstock shippers who grow and harvest shellstock, and buy and sell in or outside Washington; and
- shucker-packers whose activities may include those of harvesters and shellstock shippers, plus shucking product for packing in jars or similar containers.

Commercial shellfish operations are licensed for a period of one year, and licenses must be renewed annually. All operations must meet stringent state and federal sanitation standards, and are regularly inspected by the Department of Health.

To obtain a commercial shellfish license, please contact DOH Office of Shellfish and Water Protection at (360) 236-3330.

For a list of Washington licensed shellfish companies go to: [www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/Pubs/sf-co-alpha.pdf](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/Pubs/sf-co-alpha.pdf)

For more information and licensing and permit applications contact Washington State Department of Health Office of Shellfish and Water Protection Program at 360-236-3330, or visit [www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/commercial.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/commercial.htm) and/or Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife License Division at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/commercial>, email [commercialsales@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:commercialsales@dfw.wa.gov), or call 360-902-2464.

## Selling at Farmers Markets

Fishers and shellfish farmers that wish to sell shellfish at farmers markets must obtain a **Retail Food Establishment License** from their local county health department. Information about this license is available in the Licensing Fact Sheet.

If shellfish are further processed (e.g., shucked, smoked, cooked, cut, frozen), a WSDA Food Processor License is also required. See Processed Foods Fact Sheet. Any fish or shellfish to be displayed on ice must have fresh ice made from potable (drinkable) water.

## Fish Processing and HACCP

If you cut, clean, freeze, smoke, cook or otherwise prepare fish or fishery products for sale, you are a fish processor and will need to obtain a Food Processor License from WSDA. Visit <http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/FoodProcessors>, email [foodsafety@agr.wa.gov](mailto:foodsafety@agr.wa.gov), or call (360) 902-1876. A WDFW Wholesale Fish Dealer's License is required for commercial fish processors (see Fresh, Raw Fish section above).

Food safety hazards can be introduced when handling raw fish and shellfish as well as when processing fish or shellfish. State and federal laws require that all handlers and processors assess their operations to identify any food safety hazards that are not addressed by Standard Sanitation Operating Procedures (SSOPs). If after conducting a hazard analysis, one or more food safety hazards are still present, you are required to develop and implement a Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) Plan that is species and process specific for your operation.

Two different agencies regulate fish and shellfish HACCP requirements.

For **fresh, raw fish and processed fish and shellfish product**, contact WSDA Food Safety Program at (360) 902-1876 or <http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/FoodProcessors/HACCP.aspx>.

For **fresh, molluscan shellfish**, contact Washington State Department of Health Office of Shellfish and Water Protection Program at 360-236-3330, or visit [www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf).

## Aquatic Farms

An aquatic farm is “any facility or tract of land used for private, commercial culture of aquatic products.” This includes commercial culture of salmon, trout, oysters, clams, and aquatic plants, as well as U-catch trout ponds, ornamental fish growers, fish and shellfish hatcheries, etc. Anyone who raises aquatic products for eventual sale must register the aquatic farm with the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife. Operations where wild-caught finfish or shellfish are held temporarily, prior to sale, are excluded. Before an Aquatic Farm Registration card will be issued, a Department of Health beach certification number must be submitted for beaches used for the commercial harvest of bivalve shellfish. No fee is charged for this registration. Contact the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife License Division at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/commercial>, email [commercialsales@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:commercialsales@dfw.wa.gov), or call 360-902-2464.

---

### Recommended Fact Sheet: Licensing

For further assistance or to make suggestions on how to improve this fact sheet, please email [smallfarms@agr.wa.gov](mailto:smallfarms@agr.wa.gov) or call (360) 902-2057 or (360) 676-2059.