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Determining Consumer Acceptance and Willingness to Pay for U.S. Farm-Raised Freshwater Prawns

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Much research has been conducted on growing, handling, processing, and packaging of freshwater prawns in the Central South region of the United States (Hanson and Sempier 2005; Dasgupta 2005; D'Abramo et al. 2003; Silva et al. 1989). Still freshwater prawns are not widely known to consumers. Producers need information on how to price, market, and distribute their product. The expansion of the present localized market to a regional level requires a greater supply than is presently available, but producers are unwilling to increase production without market outlets. The current problem is how to find new markets and know what to charge. Producers need information on how to price in different markets.

In July 2006, the USDA Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program awarded a grant to the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce and Mississippi State University to identify key quality characteristics of freshwater prawns to use in marketing the product to consumers and high-end restaurants in the Central South region of the United States. The goals of this project are: 1) use trained sensory panels to identify key characteristics of freshwater prawn products for use in marketing and promotional activities; 2) develop and test price-elicitation methodologies using the trained sensory panels for later use in consumer focus groups on freshwater prawn product forms; 3) gather existing prawn-pricing information for prawn

product forms; and 4) identify restaurant chefs and marketing companies to conduct applied chef and consumer sensory evaluation. This marketing project will benefit U.S. freshwater prawn growers.

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