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

Terry Hanson, Darren Hudson, Patti Coggins, and Robert Anderson

Freshwater prawns are not widely known to consumers, and producers need information on how to price, market, and distribute their product. The expansion of the present localized market to regional levels will require a greater supply than is presently available, but producers are unwilling to increase production without market outlets. The current problems are how to find new markets and how to know what price to charge for the product.

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 to use trained sensory panels to identify key characteristics of

freshwater prawn products for use in marketing and promotional activities, to develop and test price elicitation methodologies using the trained sensory panels for later use in consumer focus groups on freshwater prawn product forms, to gather existing prawn pricing information for prawn product forms, and to identify restaurant chefs and marketing companies to conduct applied chef and consumer sensory evaluation. This marketing project will benefit U.S. freshwater prawn growers.

To date, sensory evaluation forms have been developed and a willingness-to-pay elicitation methodology has been developed. During the summer of 2007 a trained sensory panel will evaluate the freshwater prawn product for the attributes in the sensory evaluation form. Sensory-panel members also will provide regular responses to the prawn-price test-elicitation methods developed for this project.

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