

Local Farm and Chesapeake Invasive Species Provider Program (HB 63)

This bill expands the existing Local Farm Enterprise Program to include Chesapeake Invasive Species Providers. It will allow blue catfish and other invasive species caught in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries to count towards the goal of Maryland-run institutions procuring 20% of their food from local farms and fisheries.

Background:

Blue catfish is delicious, nutritious, and healthy to eat. Unfortunately, this invasive catfish species—introduced to the Chesapeake in the 1970s—now makes up more than 70% of fish biomass in some of our region’s rivers and tributaries. Blue catfish pose a significant threat to Maryland’s populations of native seafood because they feed on species such as blue crabs, striped bass and oysters, which is decreasing availability of native seafood to consumers and threatening the livelihoods of local watermen and the Chesapeake seafood industry.

The market for blue catfish and other invasive species has been slow in developing because of onerous federal inspection requirements.

The Solution:

This bill helps strengthen the demand and market for invasive species from the Chesapeake region by incentivizing state-run institutions to purchase them. It also helps certified providers access grant funds to improve their businesses and get their product to market using food aggregation, storage, processing, and distribution sites across the state.

For more information please contact:

Delegate Lorig Charkoudian, lorig.charkoudian@house.state.md.us
Phone: 410-841-3423

Additional Resources:

[UMD Extension Blue Catfish Fact Sheet](#)

[Chesapeake Bay Program Invasive Catfish Management Strategy](#)

[Chesapeake Blue Catfish Fish Facts](#)