

# Island Ad-Vantages

## THE VIEW FROM ATLANTIC AVENUE

**July 30, 2020 – What’s been the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Maine Seafood?** The seafood sector is an important part of Maine’s economy contributing a total of over \$670 million in seafood landed value in 2019 with an estimate of \$1 billion when you add the other parts of the value chain. Of that, 72% is related to the lobster fishery. Coastal fishing communities rely on the associated jobs, businesses, and overall economic activity happening here on the coast. The adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on seafood markets has been enormous. Major components of the seafood market including restaurants, cruise ships, casinos and resorts remain largely off-line. Typically 80% of all seafood is consumed in these kinds of businesses. International trade, particularly to Asia has also been drastically reduced due to tariffs over the past couple of years. These soft market conditions are affecting the value of the catch and it is creating real challenges for harvesters who want to fish, but have many bills to pay. A recent report to the Maine Legislature lists the estimated reduction in value from last year for some key species including:

- Groundfish – reduced by 63%
- Lobster – reduced by 60%
- Clams – reduced by 55%
- Seaweed – reduced by 55%
- Oysters – reduced by 35%

This time of year, lobstermen should be seeing prices of at least \$5/lb, but they are currently only seeing \$2.50/lb at best. Stonington Harbor has been the top port in Maine for landed seafood by ex-vessel value consistently for the last five years, landing over \$50 million worth of seafood in 2019. Hancock County, with over 2000 licensed fishermen, has been the number one county in Maine for landed seafood with a value of \$152 million.

There are no reliable forecasts for how or when these markets will return, so the impact to our local communities will be felt for a while. There are no immediate solutions to this challenge, but we can try to help the local businesses, and support the harvesters to some degree by eating local seafood. We hope you will make an extra effort to consume seafood next week (August 1-7) as part of the “*Fish Foreveryone Community Seafood Celebration*” either by bringing some locally caught seafood home to cook, or at one of the many restaurants that are offering local seafood in a safe setting. Our website has information about retailers and restaurants and we’re more than happy to give you some ideas on how to prepare your food.

Do you have a question about our fisheries? Send it to [info@coastalfisheries.org](mailto:info@coastalfisheries.org) or call 207.367.2708. Learn more about MCCF by visiting us online at [www.coastalfisheries.org](http://www.coastalfisheries.org).

### FISHERIES LOG

#### Prices to Harvesters in Stonington

Lobsters (shedders): \$2.50/lb.  
Bait (fresh pogies): \$80/bu.  
Fuel (diesel): \$1.90/gal.