

In January 2009, catfish producers and individuals from many other groups participated in a series of focus groups to help identify the most important issues facing the catfish industry today. Using input received from these producers, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) will launch its third national study of the catfish industry in January 2010.

The study, *Catfish 2010*, aims to gather information to help address the priority issues of the catfish industry. Producers, extension personnel, university researchers and employees from other State and Federal agencies provided valuable input into deciding the direction of the study. The priority issues identified during these meetings include feeding, use of the hybrid channel X blue catfish, vaccination, changes in aeration practices, and quantifying disease losses. Also, information will be gathered on disease control and treatment practices, breeding and hatchery management, and off-flavor.

Since this is the third national study of the catfish industry, an important objective of the study is to evaluate changes over time. The evaluation of trends will allow the industry to examine changes that the industry is making, especially in adapting to current challenges.

Producers from four states with the Nation's largest catfish inventories – Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi – will be contacted by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) in January or February 2010 and asked to voluntarily participate in Catfish 2010. For producers who choose to participate, NASS representatives will then work to set up a time to visit their operations and conduct a questionnaire.

Producers who participate will help the industry by contributing to the development of reliable and valuable information. Information from previous studies has been used to guide research, provide baseline information for economic analyses, and guide producer educational efforts. Specifically, the *Catfish 2003* study helped producers attain clearance for use of copper sulfate in hatcheries, and provided information on pond reconstruction frequency that was used to help get Federal assistance after hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service established NAHMS to collect and report accurate and valuable information on animal health and management in the United States. NAHMS does national studies on a variety of commodities including beef cow/calf operations, dairy cattle, swine, poultry, sheep, equids, and goats. To date, the catfish industry is the only aquaculture industry that has participated in a national study. For more information visit about NAHMS and *Catfish 2010* visit <http://nahms.aphis.usda.gov>