

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 916 (Senator Mautz)
Education, Energy, and the Environment

Workgroup on Seafood Marketing

This bill requires the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of Natural Resources to jointly convene a workgroup to examine challenges and opportunities in the State related to seafood marketing. The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) must provide staff for the workgroup. By December 1, 2026, the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of Natural Resources must jointly report the findings and any recommendations of the workgroup, including recommendations for legislation, to the Governor, the Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment, and the House Environment and Transportation Committee. **The bill takes effect June 1, 2026, and terminates June 30, 2027.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: MDA and DNR can provide staff for the workgroup using existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: Various programs and commissions are established within Title 10 of the Agriculture Article (Promotion and Identification of Agricultural Products) that relate to seafood marketing. The Seafood and Aquaculture Products Marketing Program is established in statute as part of MDA, and there is a related special fund (the Seafood and Aquaculture Products Marketing Fund), administered by the Secretary of Agriculture, the

purpose of which is to facilitate the marketing of seafood and aquaculture products. The fund consists of (1) revenue distributed to the fund from an annual surcharge on commercial fishing and seafood processing licenses under the Natural Resources Article; (2) money appropriated in the State budget to the fund; (3) proceeds from activities conducted by the program, such as cookbook and poster sales, seafood festivals, and similar activities; and (4) any other money from any other source accepted for the benefit of the fund. The fund may only be used for expenses related to seafood and aquaculture marketing.

A 13-member Seafood Marketing Advisory Commission, which includes the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Natural Resources, and other members appointed by the Governor, is charged with assisting the program in (1) promoting increased consumption and distribution of Maryland seafood and (2) seeking efficient methods to reduce the cost and improve the quality and marketability of Maryland seafood.

An 18-member Seafood Program Management Team, appointed by MDA and administered by the Maryland Cooperative Extension, is responsible for (1) establishing and monitoring a grant program for the implementation of appropriate projects that support the economic health of the Maryland seafood industry; (2) prioritizing, selecting for funding, and overseeing seafood industry projects under a rapid response structure; and (3) examining new technologies, equipment, raw and value-added products, feasibility studies, and market development and cost control strategies.

Finally, there is also an Innovative Seafood Technologies Program, which is charged with (1) evaluating existing innovative seafood technologies; (2) conducting studies to determine effective and efficient methods to expand the production and profitability of Maryland seafood; (3) conducting market tests to determine new product acceptability and potential demand; (4) as appropriate, implement pilot projects and small commercial demonstrations; (5) support the seafood industry in its efforts to implement innovative procedures and to comply with associated regulations; and (6) enhance the awareness of innovative products and programs among commercial buyers and the general public.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: HB 1212 (Delegate Hutchinson, *et al.*) - Environment and Transportation.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Agriculture; Department of Natural Resources; Department of Legislative Services

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