

Aquaculture Certificate of Registration

Division of Aquaculture

600 South Calhoun Street, Suite 217
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1300

Tallahassee Office: (850) 617-7600

Email: Aquaculture_web@FreshFromFlorida.com

Website: FreshFromFlorida.com

Floridians who are raising aquatic species for commercial sale must acquire an Aquaculture Certificate of Registration from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) on an annual basis. The certificate authorizes the production, harvest and sale of aquaculture products. It identifies your aquaculture products as cultured products and identifies you as an aquaculturist. It entitles you to the same benefits bestowed on other agricultural producers, including tax benefits, and reduces the number of permits you may need from other agencies.

Best Management Practices

FDACS, through the [Florida Aquaculture Policy Act, Chapter 597, F.S.](#), established the Aquaculture Best Management Practices (BMPs) as a means of assuring that aquaculture farms have minimal environmental impact. These practices represent a mutually beneficial relationship between commercial aquaculture production and natural resource protection. Farm owners and managers adopt BMPs that are appropriate for the size, production system design, location and species for their farm. All Aquaculture Certificate of Registration holders must abide by the [Aquaculture BMPs](#). Any person failing to meet the BMPs and/or refusing to implement the BMPs must obtain all necessary permits/authorizations from the appropriate regulatory authority, Rule 5L-3.007(3), F.A.C.



Shellfish Harvester Training

All Aquaculture Certificate of Registration applicants who list mollusks as a product on their application must complete Shellfish Harvester Education Training on a yearly basis. Shellfish Harvester Education provides training in sanitary shellfish harvesting, transportation and handling. It is designed to help shellfish handlers minimize the growth of *Vibrio spp.* bacteria and to reduce the risk of associated illnesses. At the end of the course, a certificate of completion will be issued as proof of training. Training may be completed either [online](#) or in person. Training for the upcoming certification year begins April 1 of each year. Make arrangements to complete the training in person at any of the following FDACS offices:

Apalachicola: (850) 653-8317

Melbourne: (321) 984-4890

Port Charlotte: (941) 613-0954

Cedar Key: (352) 543-1084

Tallahassee: (850) 617-7600

Applying for an Aquaculture Certificate of Registration

Application information is available [online](#), by contacting FDACS by phone or by email at Serina.Rocco@freshfromflorida.com

Mail the completed application, along with your proof of training (if applicable) and a check or money order for \$100, to:

FDACS
P.O. Box 6710
Tallahassee, FL 32314-6710

Once your application has been received, department staff will contact you to schedule an initial site visit, if required, and review your facility plan and pertinent BMPs. Department staff will also conduct facility inspections twice per year to ensure BMP compliance. Submerged land leaseholders are also required to maintain a valid Aquaculture Certificate of Registration as part of their lease agreement. **Certificates expire on June 30 of each year. The fee to apply for or renew a certificate is \$100.**

Applicants can contact the division for an on-site review of existing operations and a pre-construction review of the farm site and facility design plans. Producers may also visit University of Florida operated aquaculture education, demonstration and research facilities that are implementing BMPs. See [Aquaculture Production and Technical Assistance](#) for extension support contact information.



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Frequently Asked Questions

Facility Plan and Timeline Requirements for Aquaculture Certification of Registration

New applicants must submit a facility plan, briefly outlined below:

Facility Summary

- Name of company and/or applicant name
- Facility location (address or Parcel ID)
- Property ownership documentation or lease agreement (if applicable)
- Property flood zone information
- County Zoning and Land Use information (plans for Use Permits or changes if applicable)
- Brief description of business, products offered and target market (e.g. fry, fingerlings, food, ornamental, live, on ice, filleted, wholesale, retail etc.)

Note: Do not provide cost, price, or buyer contact information.



Ponds must be constructed in accordance with the [USDA-NRCS](#) or [UF-IFAS](#) guidelines.

Facility Description

- Total land acreage, pond acreage or water volume contained in tanks or raceways
- Number and size of ponds/tubs/tanks
- Species to be raised
- Sketch of the facility
- List of all applicable BMPs to be implemented
- Water source and water flow/treatment scheme
- Description of species containment measures
- Biosecurity measures or plan

Timeline for Construction and Production

- Start and end dates for facility construction
- Plan for additional permits (e.g. Water Use Permit)
- Additional phases or milestones
- Stocking dates and rates/densities
- Harvest dates and amount
- Describe future expansion plans

Can my employees each get duplicate cards with my certification number?

No, there will be one card issued per aquaculturist listed on the Aquaculture Certificate of Registration application.

I have two submerged lands leases for shellfish culture. Do I need two certificates?

Each submerged land leaseholder needs only one Aquaculture Certificate of Registration, which will list all the lease sites.

What if I have multiple upland production (farms) locations?

For upland aquaculture facilities, a certification is required for each separate facility location. If under the same name as the Aquaculture Certificate of Registration, submerged land leases could be listed with an upland site on one certificate.

I said on my application that I would abide by Best Management Practices (BMPs), what are they?

BMPs are developed with each segment of the industry in mind and are defined as the methods a farmer uses for construction and operation of a facility which result in minimal environmental impacts. The BMPs manual is available [online](#) or by contacting the Division of Aquaculture

I have a few aquaria in my garage to raise tropical fish. Do I need the certification?

Yes, if you sell the aquatic organisms you raise. No, if you are a hobbyist.

I am an authorized user on a submerged land lease for shellfish culture. Do I need the certificate?

Yes. Each year, turn in an *Aquaculture Leaseholder and Authorized User Agreement* form, along with an application. This form is available [online](#) and must be signed by you and the leaseholder and notarized. You will also need to complete the Shellfish Harvester Education Class and send proof with the forms. All forms and certificates expire June 30 of each year.

It's December, and I'm applying for the certification. Will it be valid through December of next year?

No, the Aquaculture Certificate of Registration is valid through June 30 each year, regardless of when you apply.

