

A new federal law regarding the inspection of both farmed and wild-caught catfish will go into effect on **March 1, 2016**. Filed under the name “Mandatory Inspection of Fish of the Order Siluriformes and Products Derived From Such Fish,” the federal law requires all processing and labeling of catfish of the order Siluriformes (which includes American species of catfish as well as some foreign species) be done under inspection by the United States Department of Agriculture’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). Exempt from such requirements will be catfish that are caught and directly delivered to restaurants or retailers without labeling the product.

The reason catfish are being included under the jurisdiction of the FSIS is because they are defined in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 in a similar manner to livestock such as cattle and poultry. Because the processing and labeling of land-based livestock has always been conducted by FSIS, catfish are now being included as well. As a result, any processor that sells catfish, either farm-raised or wild-caught, in interstate commerce for resale will have to apply for a grant of inspection if it wishes to continue doing so.

FSIS will provide the mandatory level of inspection service without any additional charge to the processor; however, any volunteer inspections as well as other related charges will be the responsibility of the processor. FSIS will inspect and test catfish for metals, dyes, pesticides, and animal drug residues. More information related to these changes can be found by following the links below:

Letter to prospective applicants: http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/74158429-7938-418f-9750-c09c718f2da1/GOI_Ltr_OPPD.pdf?MOD=AJPERES

Additional information about the Siluriformes inspection program:
<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/inspection/siluriformes>

2015 final rule: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/878aa316-a70a-4297-b352-2d41becc8f73/2008-0031F.pdf?MOD=AJPERES>