FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Alabama Catfish Producers Partner With School Culinary Programs

Montgomery, Ala. – Young chefs across Alabama soon will create catfish culinary delights through a partnership of Alabama catfish farmers and state school officials.

Through the inaugural Catfish Culinary Challenge, Alabama Catfish Producers will donate 600 pounds of U.S. Farm-Raised catfish to 40 Alabama high schools. Student chefs and food service worker students from those schools are part of Alabama’s Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) and Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) programs.

“We are excited about the opportunity to partner with these teachers and culinary programs across the state,” said Sumter County catfish farmer Sid Nelson. “Students may be familiar with the delicious taste of U.S. Farm-Raised catfish served in restaurants, but we want them to create new catfish culinary dishes inside their classrooms. Many of these students could become chefs and food service workers, and they will all be consumers. We want them to discover the delicious taste of catfish and learn the numerous ways it can be prepared.”

Nelson is state committee chairman of the Alabama Catfish Producers, a division of the Alabama Farmers Federation. He said through the challenge farmers will provide frozen catfish fillets to the first 40 schools that sign up through the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) program. Additionally, Nelson and other farmers will work with FCS and FCCLA programs to educate instructors and students about the safe, sustainable way U.S. Farm-Raised catfish is grown and processed.

The partnership includes a field trip for participating teachers to a catfish farm in September that also incorporates discussions with a farmer panel.

Additionally, the Alabama Catfish Producers will sponsor the FCCLA State Culinary Arts Competition in March. That contest is part of STAR — Students Taking Action for Recognition. Students in the contest will prepare a meal that includes an original recipe with catfish as the main ingredient.

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Alabama Catfish Producers Donating U.S. Farm-Raised Fish to 40 Alabama High Schools

ALSDE’s April Shrader said teachers around the state are thrilled about the opportunity to introduce catfish to their students.

“Our teachers are excited about this partnership and having U.S. Farm-Raised catfish available for their students,” said Shrader, an FCS education specialist. “We are also excited about meeting farmers and talking to them about how they raise their fish.

“The real winners in this partnership will be our students,” she continued. “They’ll learn about an important commodity grown by Alabama farmers, and they’ll have an opportunity to experiment and create new recipes with catfish grown by those farmers.”

Teachers sign up to participate in the program through the ALSDE. Contact Shrader at ashrader@ALSDE.edu for more information.

Alabama farmers produce 30% of all catfish grown in the U.S. annually, with over 100 million pounds of fish grown on 80 farms. The state’s top catfish-producing counties are Hale, Greene, Dallas and Perry.

For recipes featuring U.S. Farm-Raised catfish, visit USCatfish.com.

Click here for a video on Alabama catfish production:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=shfK85gMpmU&feature=youtu.be

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