



Heritage Shellfish Cooperative members have many years of experience between them -- some are from fishing families that stretch back three and four generations. Based in Egg Harbor, New Jersey, they have valuable perspectives on the change that has taken place in their industry over time. They have built up their individual businesses and infrastructure including docks, hatchery facilities, packing houses, and refrigerated trucks. Several of the members are dealers with interstate shellfish shipper's tags. Their market experience bestows the cooperative with a specialized understanding of local markets.

Producer Co-op

est. 2013

Industry:	Agricultural Marketing, Shellfish
Member-Owners:	3
Jobs:	to be determined
Revenues, Annual:	\$500,000 (projected)

KDC's Role

- Marketing Plan and Logo 2015—2016
- Business Plan 2015
- Website Design & IT Support 2014, 2017
- Feasibility Study 2014
- Incorporation 2014
- Bylaws 2014
- Focus Group 2013
- Organizational Development 2013

Heritage Shellfish Cooperative members recognized that to grow their on-farm income, they needed to increase the volume of what they produce, improve grow-out efficiencies, minimize and coordinate transportation/packaging expenses, and track sales and business costs. The advantages of cooperation comes through group purchasing seed stock and equipment, marketing, processing, distribution, and management of administrative tasks. They became further convinced that the co-op was the way to improve the commercial viability of member products, farm income, and quality of life as well as promoting the growth and sustainability of shellfish aquaculture in New Jersey. To do all this is nearly impossible for a single farm operation, but by collectively pooling their resources and efforts they can increase their efficiencies and move toward sustainability.



Direct marketing emphasizes and identifies the local aspect of farm-raised shellfish and addresses the root causes acknowledged by industry members as their most significant marketing challenges. Various direct market opportunities have long existed for produce, dairy and meat farmers including: farmers markets, restaurants, small retail outlets such as food cooperatives and a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). These marketing strategies are only beginning to be explored by local shellfish growers. Another issue is a severe lack of knowledge consumers have about their locally produced shellfish products. There was no story associated with the product they sold and therefore people looked at their product as a commodity rather than a specialty item grown by people whose lives revolved around the coastal waters.



"Heritage Shellfish Cooperative would like to thank you for all of the assistance we have received from the Keystone Development Center. To date, with your invaluable assistance, we have formed a cooperative with all the required legal framework and bylaws. The cooperative has researched markets, received funds to develop a web-site, created business cards, participated at various food fairs and displayed our products to the public and potential customers. We have become a viable Community Supported Fishery (CSF) at three locations in Pennsylvania with other venues planned as we are being in demand. During the development and evolution of our cooperative, we have encountered many challenges along the way. We must again thank you for your persistence and words of encouragement."

- George Mathis, President of Heritage Shellfish Cooperative



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Mission

Fostering a culture of personal and community empowerment through democratic leadership of cooperatively owned enterprises that successfully leverage economies of scale.

Work

Consulting, technical assistance, and research support for new and established co-ops (producer, consumer, worker, shared-services) in rural and urban communities in the multi-state area of PA, NJ, DE, MD, & DC.

Funding

A 501c6 non-profit organization, our work is made possible through grants from the USDA Rural Cooperative Development Grant Program and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.