Annapolis, MD - October 17, 2019 – October is National Seafood Month and the Maryland Department of Agriculture encourages Marylanders to support our local watermen and processors by purchasing Maryland seafood throughout the month and beyond.

“Maryland is known for many things and seafood is at the top of the list,” said Secretary Joe Bartenfelder. “In Maryland, the seafood sector is an important industry that contributes more than $355 million each year to the state’s economy and supports 3,341 jobs. By eating Maryland seafood, you are supporting local watermen, Maryland’s seafood industry, and the entire state’s economy.”

Maryland seafood is best known for its iconic blue crab. In 2017, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) reported that Maryland watermen harvested 30.6 million pounds of crabs, totaling nearly $48.5 million. In that same year, 671,000 pounds of oysters were harvested for a dockside value of $10.4 million. Maryland watermen also harvested 1.8 million pounds of rockfish with a dockside value of $7 million and 1.7 million pounds of Chesapeake blue catfish with a dockside value of $920,000.

Maryland’s famous blue crabs, wild oysters, rockfish, and Chesapeake blue catfish are currently in season. The department encourages Marylanders to ask for Maryland seafood when dining at restaurants and for home cooks to try recipes that include the local bounty.

The department recommends trying Chesapeake blue catfish. The Chesapeake blue catfish is a non-native species in Bay that feasts on mussels, freshwater clams, perch, rockfish, and blue crabs. By eating the flaky, white fish you can help protect the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem and support the seafood industry.

Another way to celebrate National Seafood Month is by attending the 53rd Annual U.S. Oyster Festival in St. Mary’s County on Oct. 19 & 20. This event is home to the U.S. National Oyster Shucking Championship Contest and the National Oyster Cook-Off.

For more information about Maryland seafood, where to purchase local seafood, and for seafood recipes, visit www.marylandsbest.net.