



REQUEST FOR PRE-PROPOSALS

Please Copy and Distribute to All Interested Parties

The USDA-NIFA Southern Regional Aquaculture Center solicits response from qualified multi-state teams interested in participating in the regional project:

Evaluating Alternative Feed Ingredients for Catfish and Hybrid Striped Bass

SRAC's Board of Directors has authorized up to \$360,000 for a 3-year project to evaluate alternative feed ingredients for catfish and hybrid striped bass. This project will be developed using the "comprehensive method," where a team of multi-state scientists with demonstrated records of expertise in the subject complete a single pre-proposal that addresses all project objectives. One proposal will be selected for funding based on review by a committee of scientists not involved in any of the proposals that are submitted.

Background

Over the past five years, global events have caused significant volatility in commodity markets, leading to record-high prices for aquafeed. This fluctuation has directly impacted the profitability of fed-aquaculture. In the U.S., species like hybrid and channel catfish, as well as hybrid striped bass, rely on soybean meal, corn, and fishmeal as major components in their feed formulations.

Objectives

This study will explore the potential of various domestically produced alternative ingredients (e.g., corn fermented protein, high-protein distillers dried grains with solubles, animal protein concentrate, peanut meal, canola meal, yellow field peas, sorghum, etc.) to replace traditional feedstuffs in formulated diets for catfish and hybrid striped bass.

Experimental Approach

The selected ingredients should be analyzed for nutrient composition. Experimental feeds should be extruded with graded levels to assess pellet quality (e.g., floatability, fines production, expansion indices). Selected ingredients for each species should be evaluated concerning their digestibility for energy, protein, and lipids. Digestibility and replacement level studies should be conducted in recirculating systems to determine suitable inclusion levels, followed by a larger-scale feeding trial from stockers to food-fish size to evaluate production performance under commercial conditions. In the pond trial, two diets should be tested: the conventional feed and the alternative formulation. An economic analysis should be done to ensure that the alternative feed formulations are cost-effective for feed mills and farmers.

How to Respond

Pre-proposals must address all objectives. Preference will be given to pre-proposals that show a high degree of collaboration and coordination among participants. To meet the criterion for a regional project, the pre-proposal must include collaboration from scientists in two or more states or territories in the

Southern Region (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, U.S. Virgin Islands, and Virginia).

The pre-proposal must include a one-page vita for each participant and a proposed budget for each participating institution or organization. Pre-proposals, vitae, and budgets that are not in the proper format will not be considered. (See “RFP Format Comprehensive” file attached or contact Kristen Walters with the SRAC office at 662-686-3269.)

Send an electronic copy of the pre-proposal in Word format to Jimmy Avery, SRAC Director as an email attachment (jimmy.avery@msstate.edu) by **June 1, 2026**. Proposals received after that date will not be considered.