

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4236

To amend the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act to expand eligibility of Department of Agriculture loans and grants for fishing and mariculture businesses, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 26, 2026

Ms. MURKOWSKI (for herself, Mr. KING, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. MERKLEY, and Ms. COLLINS) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

A BILL

To amend the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act to expand eligibility of Department of Agriculture loans and grants for fishing and mariculture businesses, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “American Seafood
5 Competitiveness Act of 2026”.

1 **SEC. 2. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE LOANS AND**
2 **GRANTS FOR FISHING AND MARICULTURE**
3 **BUSINESSES.**

4 (a) DEFINITIONS OF FARMER AND FARMING.—Sec-
5 tion 343(a) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Develop-
6 ment Act (7 U.S.C. 1991(a)) is amended—

7 (1) in paragraph (1), by striking “farming.”
8 and inserting “farming, commercial fishing, or fish
9 processing.”;

10 (2) in paragraph (2), by striking “farming.”
11 and inserting “farming, commercial fishing, and fish
12 processing.”; and

13 (3) by adding at the end the following:

14 “(14) COMMERCIAL FISHING.—The term ‘com-
15 mercial fishing’ means fishing (as defined in section
16 3 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation
17 and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1802)) in which
18 the fish harvested, either in whole or in part, are in-
19 tended to enter commerce or enter commerce
20 through sale, barter, or trade.

21 “(15) COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL.—The
22 term ‘commercial fishing vessel’ means a fishing ves-
23 sel and a fish processing vessel (as those terms are
24 defined in section 2101 of title 46, United States
25 Code).

1 “(16) FISH.—The term ‘fish’ has the meaning
2 given the term in section 2101 of title 46, United
3 States Code.

4 “(17) FISH PROCESSING.—The term ‘fish proc-
5 essing’ means the processing of fish for commercial
6 use or consumption.

7 “(18) FISH PROCESSING FACILITY.—The term
8 ‘fish processing facility’ means a facility or vessel,
9 boat, ship, or other craft used or equipped for fish
10 processing.”.

11 (b) FARM OWNERSHIP LOANS.—

12 (1) ELIGIBILITY.—Section 302(a) of the Con-
13 solidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7
14 U.S.C. 1922(a)) is amended by adding at the end
15 the following:

16 “(3) ELIGIBILITY OF WILD-CAUGHT FISH AND
17 SHELLFISH.—Notwithstanding any other provision
18 of this Act, for purposes of direct and guaranteed
19 farm loans under this subtitle—

20 “(A) the terms ‘farmer’ and ‘rancher’ shall
21 include an individual or entity engaged in com-
22 mercial fishing or fish processing; and

23 “(B) the terms ‘farm’ and ‘ranch’ shall in-
24 clude—

25 “(i) a commercial fishing vessel; and

1 “(ii) a fish processing facility.”.

2 (2) PURPOSES.—Section 303(a) of the Consoli-
3 dated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C.
4 1923(a)) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
5 lowing:

6 “(3) COMMERCIAL FISHERY PARTICIPANTS;
7 FISH PROCESSORS.—

8 “(A) COMMERCIAL FISHERY PARTICI-
9 PANTS.—An individual or entity engaged in
10 commercial fishing may only use a direct or
11 guaranteed loan under this subtitle for—

12 “(i) acquiring a commercial fishing
13 permit;

14 “(ii) acquiring a commercial fishing
15 vessel; and

16 “(iii) making capital improvements to
17 a commercial fishing vessel.

18 “(B) FISH PROCESSORS.—An individual or
19 entity engaged in fish processing may use a di-
20 rect or guaranteed loan under this subtitle for
21 acquiring or making capital improvements to a
22 fish processing facility.”.

23 (c) FARM OPERATING LOANS.—

24 (1) ELIGIBILITY.—Section 311(a) of the Con-
25 solidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7

1 U.S.C. 1941(a)) is amended by adding at the end
2 the following:

3 “(3) ELIGIBILITY OF WILD-CAUGHT FISH AND
4 SHELLFISH.—Notwithstanding any other provision
5 of this Act, for purposes of direct and guaranteed
6 farm loans under this subtitle—

7 “(A) the terms ‘farmer’ and ‘rancher’ shall
8 include an individual or entity engaged in com-
9 mercial fishing or fish processing; and

10 “(B) the terms ‘farm’ and ‘ranch’ shall in-
11 clude—

12 “(i) a commercial fishing vessel; and

13 “(ii) a fish processing facility.”.

14 (2) PURPOSES.—Section 312 of the Consoli-
15 dated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C.
16 1942) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
17 lowing:

18 “(f) COMMERCIAL FISHERY PARTICIPANTS; FISH
19 PROCESSORS.—

20 “(1) COMMERCIAL FISHERY PARTICIPANTS.—

21 An individual or entity engaged in commercial fish-
22 ing may only use a direct or guaranteed loan under
23 this subtitle for the costs associated with operating
24 and maintaining a commercial fishing vessel.

1 “(2) FISH PROCESSORS.—An individual or enti-
 2 ty engaged in fish processing may use a direct or
 3 guaranteed loan under this subtitle for the costs as-
 4 sociated with operating and maintaining a fish proc-
 5 essing facility.”.

6 (d) LOCAL AGRICULTURE MARKET PROGRAM.—

7 (1) FARMERS’ MARKETS AND LOCAL FOOD PRO-
 8 MOTION PROGRAM.—Section 210A(d)(6) of the Agri-
 9 cultural Marketing Act of 1946 (7 U.S.C.
 10 1627c(d)(6)) is amended by adding at the end the
 11 following:

12 “(F) ELIGIBILITY OF WILD-CAUGHT FISH
 13 AND SHELLFISH.—For purposes of this para-
 14 graph—

15 “(i) an agricultural commodity or
 16 product described in subsection (a)(12)
 17 shall include fish (as defined in section
 18 2101 of title 46, United States Code) that
 19 is caught, taken, or harvested from the
 20 wild; and

21 “(ii) the eligible activities described in
 22 paragraph (2) shall include domestic sea-
 23 food marketing.”.

24 (2) WAIVER OF MATCHING FUNDS REQUIRE-
 25 MENTS.—Section 210A(i) of the Agricultural Mar-

1 keting Act of 1946 (7 U.S.C. 1627c(i)) is amended
 2 by adding at the end the following:

3 “(4) WAIVER OF MATCHING FUNDS REQUIRE-
 4 MENTS.—The Secretary may waive a requirement
 5 for a recipient of a grant under this section to pro-
 6 vide matching funds, or reduce the amount of
 7 matching funds required to be provided, if the re-
 8 cipient is engaged in commercial fishing or fish proc-
 9 essing (as those terms are defined in section 343(a)
 10 of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development
 11 Act (7 U.S.C. 1991(a))).”.

12 (e) IMPLEMENTATION AND COORDINATION.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after
 14 the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of
 15 Agriculture shall take such actions as are necessary
 16 to ensure the successful and effective integration of
 17 individuals and entities in the commercial fishing in-
 18 dustry, including those engaged in commercial fish-
 19 ing or fish processing (as those terms are defined in
 20 section 343(a) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural
 21 Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1991(a))), into each pro-
 22 gram of the Department of Agriculture for which
 23 those individuals and entities are made eligible
 24 under the amendments made by this section.

1 (2) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND GUIDANCE.—

2 In carrying out paragraph (1), the Secretary of Ag-
3 riculture shall—

4 (A) provide outreach and technical assist-
5 ance to participants in the commercial fishing
6 industry, including through cooperative agree-
7 ments and public-private and other partner-
8 ships, to promote awareness of and access to
9 relevant programs;

10 (B) provide guidance and training to rel-
11 evant agency personnel of the Department of
12 Agriculture, including through cooperative
13 agreements and public-private and other part-
14 nerships, to ensure program services are effec-
15 tively delivered to the commercial fishing indus-
16 try; and

17 (C) coordinate, as appropriate, with the
18 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administra-
19 tion and other relevant Federal and State agen-
20 cies to implement the amendments made by this
21 section.

22 **SEC. 3. EXTENSION OF CREDIT TO BUSINESSES PROVIDING**
23 **SERVICES TO PRODUCERS OR HARVESTERS**
24 **OF AQUATIC PRODUCTS.**

25 (a) FARM CREDIT BANKS.—

1 (1) ELIGIBILITY FOR CREDIT AND FINANCIAL
2 SERVICES.—Section 1.9 of the Farm Credit Act of
3 1971 (12 U.S.C. 2017) is amended—

4 (A) in paragraph (2), by striking “or” at
5 the end;

6 (B) by redesignating paragraph (3) as
7 paragraph (4); and

8 (C) by inserting after paragraph (2) the
9 following:

10 “(3) persons furnishing to producers or har-
11 vesters of aquatic products services directly related
12 to their operating needs; or”.

13 (2) PURPOSES FOR EXTENSIONS OF CREDIT.—
14 Section 1.11(c)(1) of the Farm Credit Act of 1971
15 (12 U.S.C. 2019(c)(1)) is amended by inserting
16 “and to persons furnishing services directly related
17 to the operating needs of producers or harvesters of
18 aquatic products” after “needs”.

19 (b) PRODUCTION CREDIT ASSOCIATIONS.—Section
20 2.4(a) of the Farm Credit Act of 1971 (12 U.S.C.
21 2075(a)) is amended—

22 (1) in paragraph (2), by striking “and” at the
23 end;

24 (2) in paragraph (3), by striking the period at
25 the end and inserting “; and”; and

- 1 (3) by adding at the end the following:
- 2 “(4) persons furnishing to producers or har-
- 3 vesters of aquatic products services directly related
- 4 to their operating needs.”.

