

# Branding Seafood

## Developing a Marketing Plan to Sell Value-Added Seafood Products

You have invested in new manufacturing technology, novel food ingredients or specialized packaging to create a value-added seafood product for retail or wholesale markets.

Your new product is processed to be wholesome, nutritious, flavorful and/or have a long shelf life. Busy people who demand quick preparation will appreciate its convenience. Now you are ready to begin marketing this product.

But wait. How do you let potential customers know that you have something new for them? In a market overflowing with seafood products, how do you make your product stand out?

In a global economy, you must be both an efficient producer and an effective marketer of your seafood. Marketing food need not be complicated if you begin with a few simple strategies.

To start, know what your customers want and create a product that satisfies their needs.

This publication will help you outline a marketing program to introduce customers to your value-added seafood – and persuade them to purchase it.

### The Four Ps of Marketing

A good marketing plan should have the following elements (adapted from E. Jerome McCarthy's "Four Ps" of the marketing mix, introduced in the 1960s):

**A *product* that meets the consumers' expectations for nutrition, taste and convenience.**

People are attracted to seafood because it is high in protein, low in fat and can be seasoned easily with a variety of unique flavors. Consumers are demanding

more foods that require little preparation at home because they are too busy to cook for themselves. To reach a wide range of customers, consider selling a variety of products so retailers and food distributors can choose the items that appeal most to their customers. Your value-added seafood should be consistent in quality to provide customers with a reliable eating experience each time they purchase and consume your products.

**A *price* that reflects your product's level of quality.**

When setting your price, understand your target customers' sensitivity to cost. Discount stores attract customers who value low prices. Customers at high-end grocery stores are willing to pay more money for a higher level of quality. Many consumers also are willing to pay a higher price for products that appear homemade, originate from a specific geographic location – think Napa Valley wines – or offer distinct advantages that competing products do not.

**Promotion or advertising of the product.**

Promoting your product informs customers:

- What your product is;
- Where it can be purchased;
- Why your products are worth buying; and
- How your products are better than those of your competitors.

Different types of advertising can be used to grab consumers' attention and persuade them to choose your value-added product.

**A *place* to sell your product.**

Product distribution, particularly of refrigerated and frozen products, is an important and challenging part

of marketing value-added products. Create a focused distribution strategy to control costs and grow sales at a pace manageable for your business. Where you sell your products will depend on where your target customers regularly buy their seafood. Because nearly 80 percent of seafood is purchased in restaurants, your marketing may primarily target restaurants. Or you may choose to focus on grocery stores and retail seafood markets.

## Creating a Marketing Program

Before you begin your marketing program, you need to answer the following questions:

- What kind of image do you want your company to project to the public?
- How do you want your customers to think about your product?

The answers to these questions will help you define your marketing message.

The first step in your marketing plan is to create a brand so that you can build a relationship with your customers. A **brand** is any word, creative design, sound or color that a company uses to provide an identity that distinguishes its product from the competition. There are three elements within a brand: brand name, logo and tag line.

### Brand Name

A **brand name** contains simple wording that is designed to promote instant awareness of the product. A great brand name:

*Suggests product benefits.*

Concepts implied by your brand name like “wild-caught,” “locally harvested” and “fresh-not-frozen” tell your customers something about the food they are buying. For example, Carteret County recently developed a brand identity to create more public visibility for local seafood. The county decided on “Carteret Catch” as its brand name. A brand like “Carteret Catch” ties your product to a geographical area that is known for fresh local seafood. For more about Carteret Catch, visit: [www.carteretcatch.org](http://www.carteretcatch.org).

*Fits the company or the image of the product.*

Your product’s brand name, logo and tag line must project a certain image to your customers. For what values do you want your company or product to be known? Perhaps you value products made only from seafood that has been harvested from the North Carolina coast. What do you want to be in your customers’ minds when they see your brand? If you value locally caught seafood, your brand name or logo should emphasize that. The best example of this is the “Freshness from North Carolina Waters” program offered by the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS). Learn more about the program at: [www.nc-seafood.org](http://www.nc-seafood.org).

*Is memorable, distinctive and positive.*

To focus your marketing plan, choose words to convey concepts – like “quality,” “ocean harvested” or “fresh from North Carolina fishermen” – that you want consumers to associate with your new product.

*Is a registered trademark.*

File for trademark protection so that you can get full ownership of your brand identity. Registration of your trademark provides legal protection for the names, logos or symbols you use for the products you sell. In North Carolina, trademark protection can be obtained from the N.C. Department of the Secretary of State for a small fee. Visit the Web: [www.sosnc.com](http://www.sosnc.com), scroll down the screen, and click on “Trademarks Section.”

### Logo



**Fig. 1: Southern Farm uses two different logos to market its farm and seafood products.**

A **logo** is an identifying symbol or image that complements the brand name. The hallmark of a logo design is simplicity – less is always more. The simpler a design appears, the more likely it is to attract attention. Your logo must reproduce well in both color and black-and-white, and transfer clearly to brochures, office stationery and even clothing.

Visual imagery makes a greater impression than words alone. Because imagery is a key component in successful branding, consider consulting a professional graphic designer to create your logo.

If you want to highlight that your products are from North Carolina, consider also using the NCDA&CS promotional logo that contains a silhouette of the state. This logo is free to any North Carolina seafood business. The NCDA&CS makes an annual contribution to any North Carolina seafood company that uses the “Freshness from North Carolina Waters” logo in its advertising. For more information, contact William Small of the NCDA&CS Seafood Marketing Division at 252/331-4773 or [william.small@ncmail.net](mailto:william.small@ncmail.net).

### Tag Line

A **tag line** further describes and identifies the brand name to the target customers. While your brand name and logo identify your product, your tag line provides additional information that differentiates your product from other similar products. For example, your logo might focus on your product being made with seafood, while your tag line might highlight the coastal traditions, seasonal nature or the local origins of your seafood.

When Carteret County created the “*Carteret Catch*” brand name, it also established “Select North Carolina Seafood from the Fishermen of Carteret County” as its tag line, located right below the brand name on the logo. The word “Select” expresses an image of a quality or premium product. The phrase “from the Fishermen of Carteret County” tells consumers that their seafood was harvested locally.

### Creating Marketing Materials

Your next step is to create marketing materials like sales brochures, business cards, company letterhead and product packaging that prominently and consistently display your new brand name, logo and tag line. Food service buyers often require companies to forward sales information on new products so that the buyers can decide which items interest them. Sales literature does not have to be expensive, but should contain as much of the following as possible:

- A clear photograph of the product in its packaging or displayed on a plate.
- A list of the available items.

- A short narrative describing each product.
- Instructions for preparing each item.
- Description of the product’s packaging, such as unit or case size and units per case.
- The name, address, phone number and e-mail address of the company and the name of an individual to contact. Include your company’s Web site address, if you have one.

### Advertising and Promotions

The objective of advertising and promotions is to generate consumer awareness about your brand, your products and where they can be purchased. It is important to communicate to your customers why your products are worth buying. There are various types of advertising with varying costs that can be used to promote your products.

- *Print advertising* includes newspapers, magazines, direct mail, billboards and posters that feature a simple and clear brand message. Print ads should feature the brand name prominently and use graphics and colors from your product’s packaging to help consumers easily notice your product in a retail display case. Print advertising can be especially cost effective in smaller, local markets.
- *Radio advertising* is another possibility, although it lacks the visual component to reinforce your brand logo in the consumers’ minds.
- *Television advertising* has a strong visual element but can be especially expensive to produce and run over a long period of time.
- *Online advertising* includes a company Web site or online ads. Consider creating a Web site for your product to reach a larger market through the Internet. To inform customers, include the Web site address on your printed promotions, including your product packaging.

Promotions can be a very effective tool to generate consumer awareness. A promotion is any activity that highlights your products in a way that is different from your everyday product or sales activity.

- *Bonus packs* – such as “10% More Free” – are a packaging promotion that consumers perceive as getting extra value for their money.
- *In-store promotions* such as sale prices featured in weekly store flyers or coupons will bring

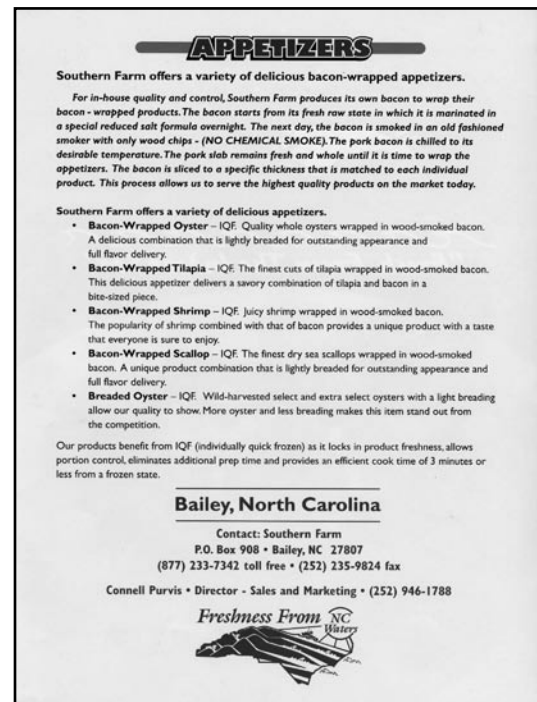
attention to your items and may help you secure additional shelf space within the store. The sale price of your product during an in-store promotion is negotiated between you and the store's management.

- Co-branding is a great idea to bring additional



experienced sales force and a network of potential customers that would be unknown or unavailable to you if you were managing your own sales program.

## Conclusion



**Fig. 2: Southern Farm produced a one-page brochure for its value-added seafood products.**

value to your products, like using Texas Pete® hot sauce to flavor a crab cake or deviled crab product. You will need to get permission from the other company to use its product name in your branding, which you can obtain by contacting the sales manager for that company. Be sure, however, that any branded product you join with is good fit for your company's brand image. The Texas Pete® brand could be a good fit for a North Carolina processor because the hot sauce company is a North Carolina business and the product is widely recognized by North Carolinians.

You might want to use a food broker to sell your product to grocery chains and restaurants, particularly if you are a small business. A food broker is a contract sales person whose salary comes from a commission he or she receives on the volume of product sold to clients on your behalf. Brokers generally specialize in selling to retail stores or restaurant accounts. By employing food brokers, you gain access to an

The globalization of the seafood market has stressed many North Carolina processors. However, they can tap into Americans' growing demand for easy-to-prepare value-added seafood products. Regional restaurants and specialty retail stores have the strongest demand for value-added seafood. To better sell to these businesses and their customers, processors must create a brand identity and advertising program to promote new products. Efficient manufacturing and effective marketing are essential. The information in this publication will give you an overview on how best to market a new product to your customers. For additional resources, visit: [www.ncseagrant.org/brandingseafood](http://www.ncseagrant.org/brandingseafood).



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