



Commercial Aquaponics: Rules and Regulations

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There is increasing interest in aquaponic systems for home or commercial use in Florida. As an integral component, animals in aquaponic systems provide dissolved nutrients for plant growth, remove organic detritus and are often co-products that can be sold for human consumption.



Tilapia

Commercial systems commonly include tilapia (*Oreochromis* spp.), giant freshwater prawn (*Marcobrachium rosenbergii*) or red claw crayfish (*Cherax quadricarinatus*). As these animals are non-native to Florida, there are specific regulations concerning their live possession, culture, transportation and sale.

Additional restrictions must be implemented to prevent the escape, establishment and spread of invasive species into Florida's natural environment, which could have detrimental impacts to the state's natural aquatic resources. [Rule 68-5, Florida Administrative Code \(F.A.C.\)](#) prohibits the release of any non-native species into Florida waters.

Conditional species are not allowed for personal possession. Neither the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) nor the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) will issue a permit to possess these species in backyard aquaponic systems.

Most species of tilapia are either restricted or prohibited in Florida. Blue tilapia, *Oreochromis aureus*, Nile tilapia, *O. niloticus*, and hybrids of the two species *may* be possessed, transported and cultured without a special permit in four [FWC designated regions](#): North Central, Northeast, South and Southwest. (see [Rule 68-5.002, F.A.C.](#)).

Mozambique and Wami tilapia (*O. mossambicus* and *O. urolepis*), hybrids of the two species, and the red claw crayfish, are designated as restricted species, requiring a valid Aquaculture Certificate of Registration and a Restricted Species Authorization from the Division. All other tilapia species or hybrids are prohibited in Florida. For more information, refer to the Division's [Restricted Species Aquaculture: Rules and Regulations](#) fact sheet.



Red claw crayfish

Individuals interested in starting or operating an aquaponic facility as a commercial business producing and selling aquatic animals must apply for an Aquaculture Certificate of Registration. Certified facilities are regulated by the (FDACS) Division of Aquaculture and must abide by the Best Management Practices, in accordance with [Chapter 597, Florida Statutes](#). For information about certification or to apply for a Certificate, please visit: www.FDACS.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Aquaculture/Aquaculture-Certificate-of-Registration.



Giant freshwater prawn

Commercial vegetable production is regulated by the [Division of Fruit and Vegetables](#), Bureau of Inspection.

Individuals that plan to process and sell their products for human consumption must acquire a Food Processing Permit from the [Division of Food Safety](#).

For aquaponic information and helpful links visit the [Sea Grant Florida Aquaponics Website](#).

For more detailed information about aquaponics production: [Kentucky State University's Aquaponics Production Manual](#).

