PORTLAND FISH EXCHANGE

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GOVERNMENT REPORT SHOWS CONTINUED JOB LOSSES
IN MAINE'S SEAFOOD ECONOMIC SECTOR

Data released this week by the federal National Marine Fisheries Service show that Maine lost over 1,500 jobs in its seafood processing and wholesaling sector in just five years.

The annual *Fisheries of the United States* is a comprehensive report on US fishery landings, seafood trade, consumption, and business activity. The most recent report is for 2005. Employment statistics are reported through 2004.
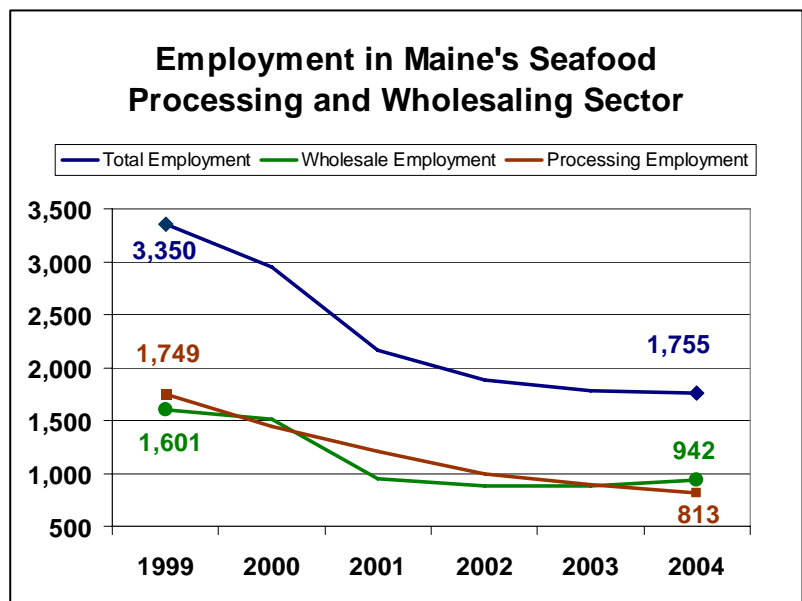
The report shows that in 2004, Maine's workforce in seafood processing and wholesaling facilities totaled 1,755 people, down from over 3,300 in 1999. Over the last five years, the number of jobs in this economic sector dropped by almost 50%.

In an effort to stem further losses of Maine jobs, the Portland Fish Exchange is promoting legislation to reform the State's bycatch lobster and fuel sales tax policies.

"We have to level the playing field with the rest of New England," said Tom Valleau, president of the Portland Fish Exchange. "Every other state allows bycatch lobster to be landed, and no other state levies a fuel sales tax on its fishing fleet. These outdated laws are driving good jobs and economic activity out of Maine."

Employment in Maine's Seafood Processing and Wholesaling Sector

"Maine's workforce is paying the price of failing to preserve our seafood processing sector," said Exchange manager Hank Soule. "The federal figures largely mirror our experience here at the Exchange: a 50% reduction in staffing over the last several years."

The Portland Fish Exchange is the nation's only publicly owned non-profit seafood auction. The Exchange is charged with providing a fair, open and transparent marketplace for buyers and sellers of wholesale seafood, and promoting a sustainable seafood industry in New England. Approximately 90% of Maine's groundfish catch is sold on the Exchange.

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