New York Aquaculture Producer Survey Results for 2025

Sea Grant
NEW YORK

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March 2026



An aquaponic system growing various plants, juvenile bay scallops, and tilapia swimming in a tank.

Summary of the Survey Results

The State of New York has a diverse and growing aquaculture industry which produces shellfish, seaweed, finfish and aquaponic plants. The Great Lakes region has numerous land-based finfish operations producing fish for restocking public waterways as well as human consumption. The marine region around Long Island is primarily where shellfish and sugar kelp (i.e., seaweed) are produced. A couple of operations in the Great Lakes region produce freshwater mussels for habitat restoration purposes. Aquaponic operations also exist around the state raising fish in conjunction with terrestrial plants. The aquaculture industry in New York supports a large recreational fishing industry by restocking public waterways, it enhances natural populations of shellfish in local embayments which improves ecosystems, and it also provides a local and sustainable source of seafood that can increase food security and support local economies.

To better assess the aquaculture industry across the state, New York Sea Grant (NYSG) developed an annual survey to collect information from the industry. The ten-question survey sought to better understand the georgraphic distribution of industry operations, their production levels, species produced, types of gear used, and the number of jobs it supported. This voluntary and anonymous survey was distributed in January of 2026 to collect information from the previous calendar year. It was sent to the 98 known aquaculture operations from all sectors: private, not-for-profit (e.g., Universities, Indigenous Nations, etc.) and governmental (i.e., federal, state, or local municipality) and 69 responses were received. While the results in this report do not represent the industry entirely, but only those respondents, it helps provide insights into statewide aquaculture activities. The goal of this survey is to be distributed annually so the growth and changes of the industry can be measured over time. This annual report will be publicly available and housed on the NYSG website. It will also be used to increase awareness and educate the public about New York's aquaculture industry.

Some key finds based on the survey responses include:

- Respondents were from all but one region of the state. The most were in the Long Island region (36) and the next highest were in the Finger Lakes region (9).
- There are 9 operations over 75 years old which are run by NY State and focus on stocking and restoration. The private sector, which represented 58% of responses, has 25 that have been operating for 15 years or less.
- Responses show that 45 raise products for food while 44 raised products for stocking purposes or restoration. Seaweed was not included in these values.
- 33% of responses (14) acquire their seed only from out-of-state hatcheries but 30% of the responses (13) said they get seed from both in-state *and* out-of-state hatcheries.
- A total of 419 jobs were supported by responders with 269 being full-time positions.
- Survey responders sold 12.1 million pieces of legal-size shellfish, produced 1.7 million pounds of finfish, raised 76,000 wet pounds of seaweed, and 1,100 pounds of aquaponic plants.
- The top two farmed species among respondents were oyster and trout.

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Key Terms and Definitions

Aquaponic Plants - plants raised in water circulating from tanks that finfish are raised in. This includes consumable produce (e.g., lettuce), cannabis, or decorative plants.

Consumption - to be eaten as a food source by people.

Grow-out Operation - a farm that gets seed from a hatchery and raises it to legal or market size.

Hatchery - a facility that spawns adult animals to produce juvenile shellfish or finfish, or produces spools of string set with seaweed spores. A hatchery can also be a grow-out operation.

Restoration - the act of adding finfish or shellfish to a habitat to increase natural populations which may get harvested by recreational fishing activities.

Seaweed - refers to various species of macroalgae. New York, primarily raises sugar kelp.

Seed - a general term for the juvenile stage of various organisms produced in a hatchery by spawning adults. Seed is raised at a grow-out operation until it reaches market size.

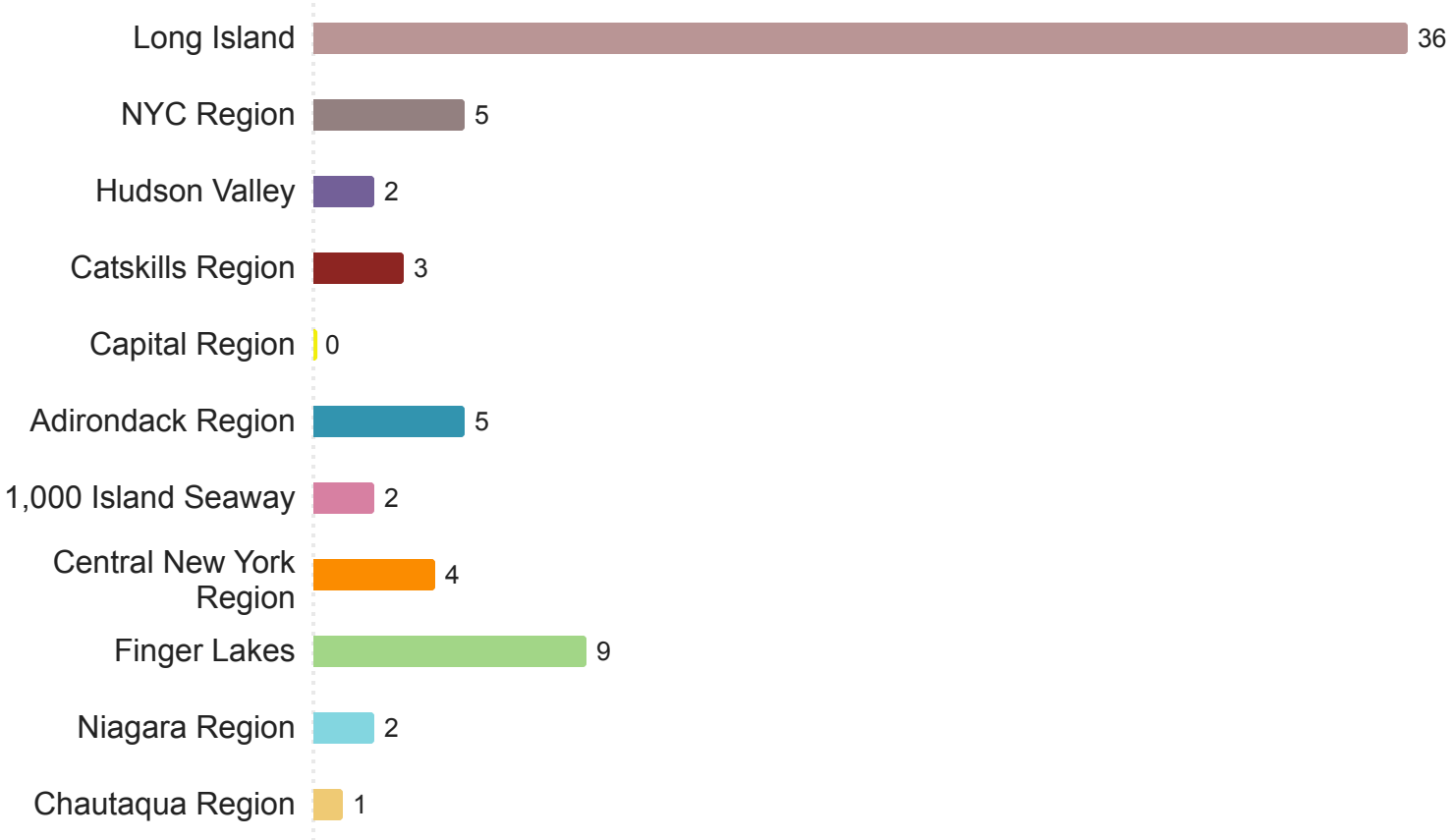
- ***Shellfish seed:*** animals <1 year old, typically between 1 and 38mm (1.5”) in shell length.
- ***Seaweed seed:*** a spool of string that has had seaweed spores set on the string.
- ***Finfish seed:*** includes eggs, fry (juveniles without a yolk-sac), or fingerlings (juveniles about the size of human finger with scales and working fins).

Shellfish - refers to the typical species produced in New York. This currently includes the eastern oyster (*C. virginica*), hard clam (*M. mercenaria*), bay scallop (*A. irradians*), ribbed mussel (*G. demissa*), and freshwater mussels (*Unionid* family).

Distribution of Aquaculture Operations in New York

Survey participants selected the region where they are located using the map below.

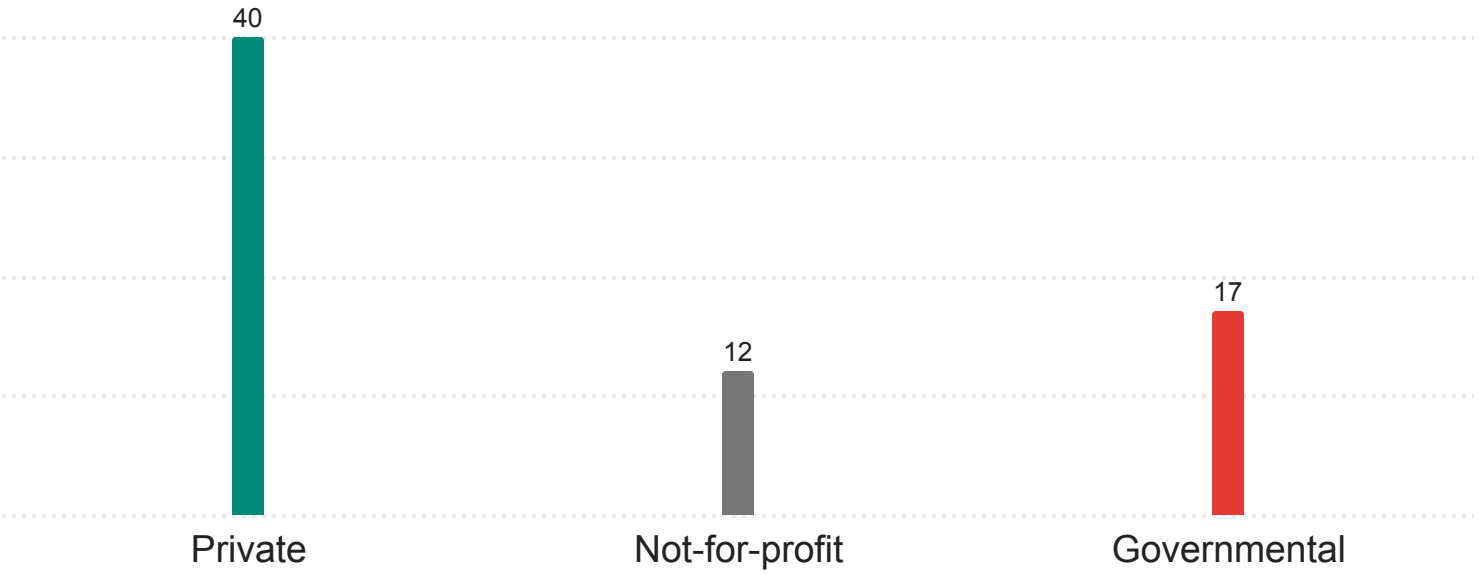
69 Responses



Business Classification of Operations

The industry is comprised of 3 different categories based on their funding sources.

69 Responses

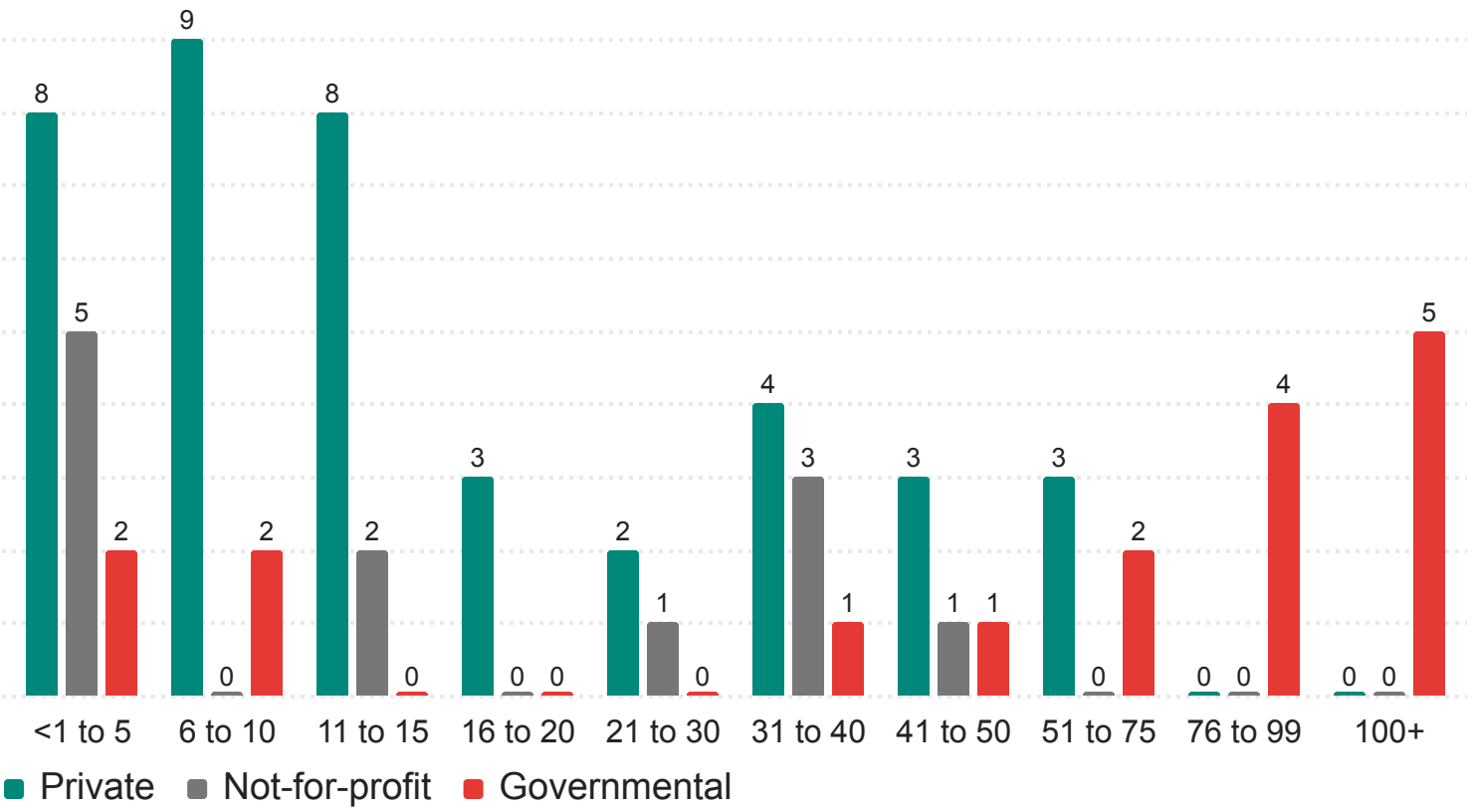


Private: Operation owned by an individual or group that is privately funded.
Not-for-profit: Has 501(c)(3) status. Includes Colleges/Universities and Indigenous Nations.
Governmental: Receives federal, state, or local funding (*e.g.*, NYSDEC or Town Hatcheries).

Age of New York Aquaculture Operations

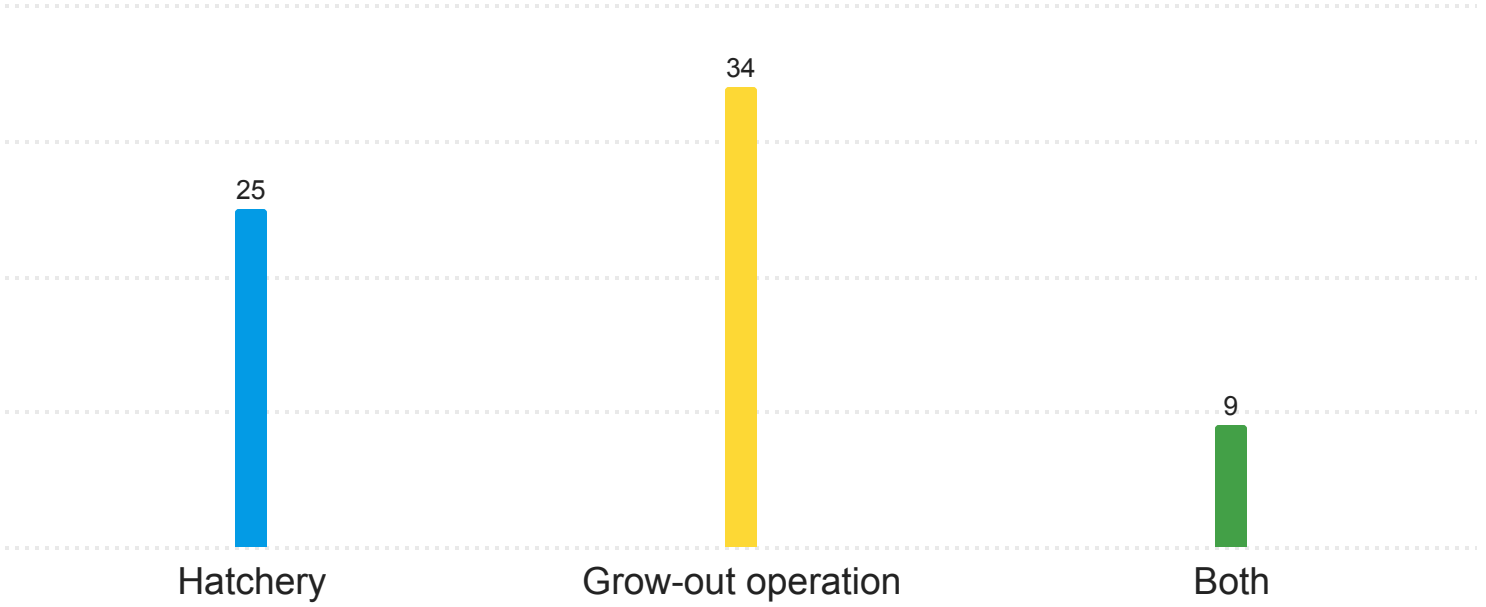
The below graph shows the range in years that each sector's operations have been open.

69 Responses



Number of Hatchery and Grow-out Operations

68 Responses

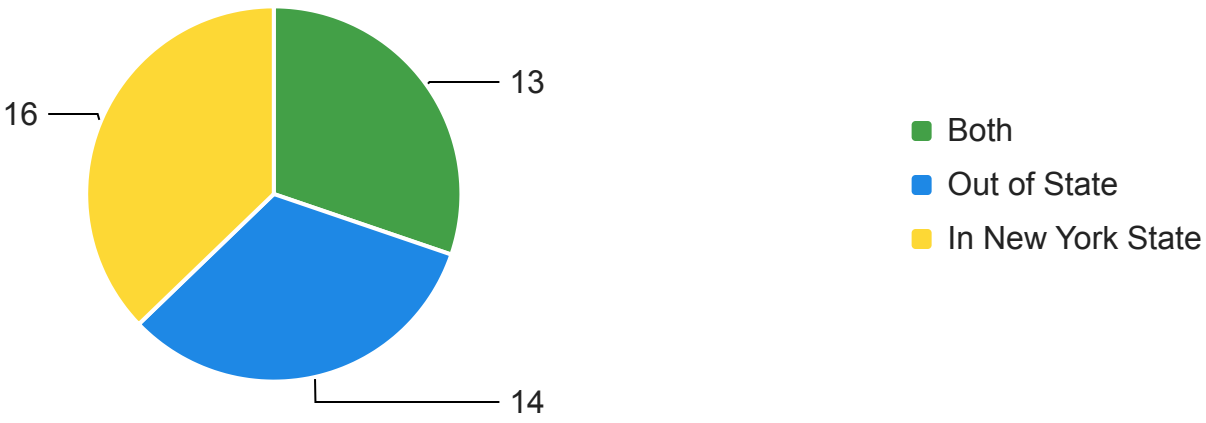


Hatchery Operation: Produces shellfish and finfish by conditioning and spawning adults.
Grow-out Operation: Acquires seed/eggs/fingerlings from a hatchery and raises them on their farm.
Both: May spawn some species but also acquire seed from other hatcheries.

Source of Seed

Grow-out operations were asked where the hatchery they get their seed from is located.

43 Responses

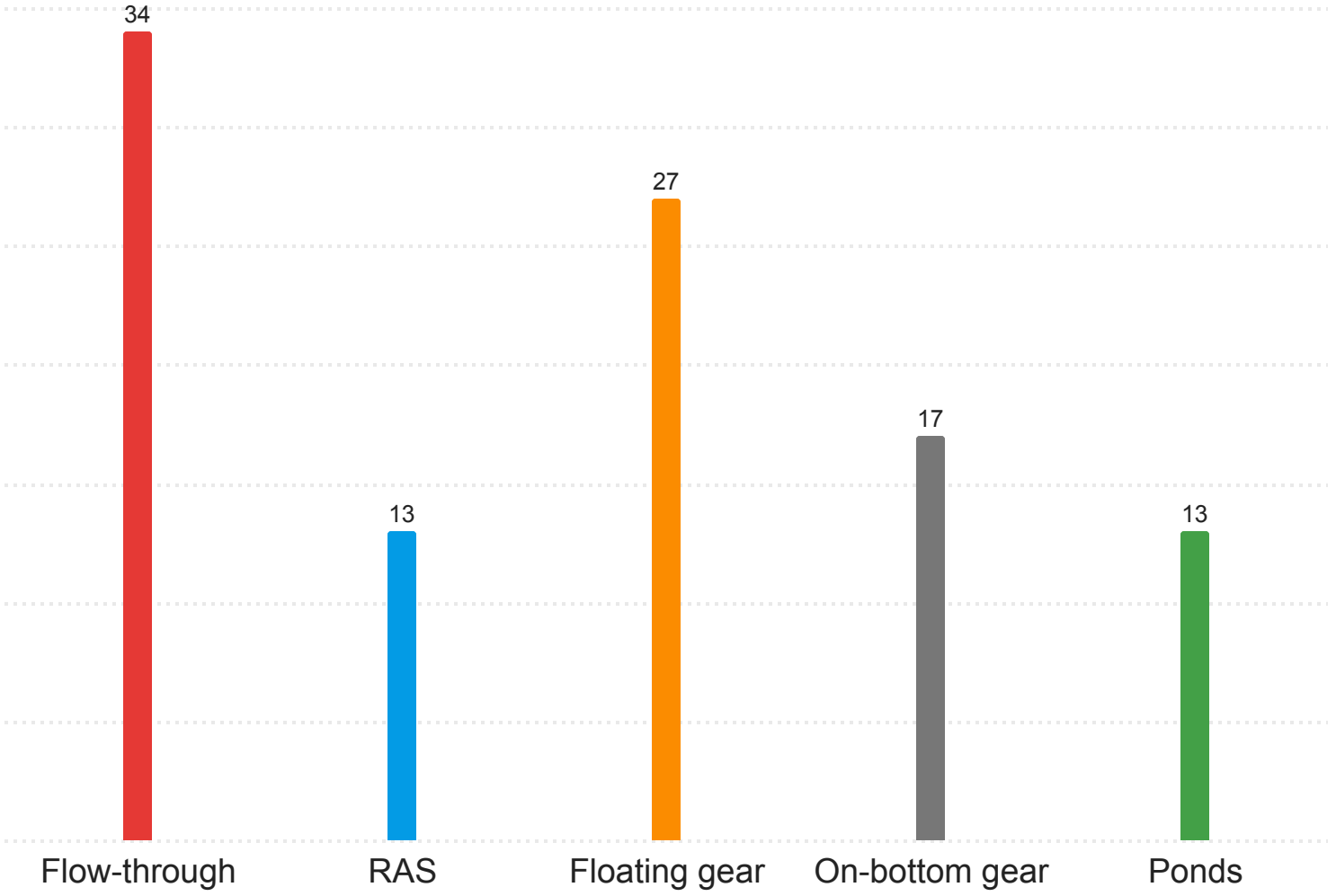


Seed includes juvenile shellfish, finfish (eggs, fry, or fingerlings), and/or seaweed spools produced in a hatchery and then sold to grow-out operations.

Aquaculture Production Systems

This graph shows the various types of systems that are used and by how many operations.

69 Responses



***Operations may use multiple systems ***
(i.e., shellfish: floating & bottom gear; finfish: ponds & flow-through)

Flow-through: Systems that draw water from a source (marine, river, or groundwater) and distribute it around the facility before discharging it. Typical in shellfish hatcheries and finfish operations.

RAS: Recirculating aquaculture systems are newer technology that reuse the water by filtering it over and over with minimal discharge. Common in finfish and aquaponic operations.

Ponds: Often man-made; shallow and can be drained for harvest and maintenance.

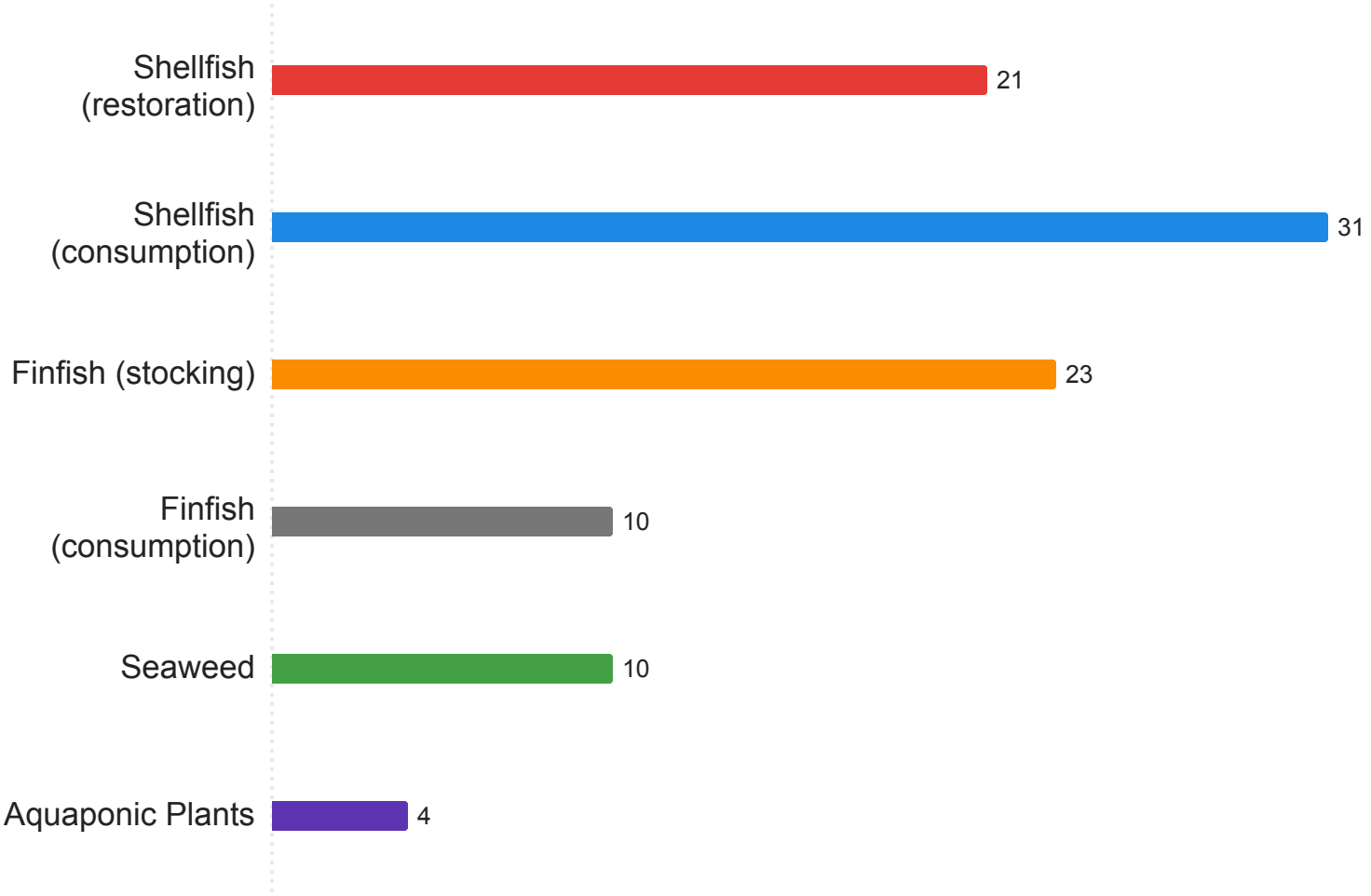
Floating gear: Floating systems (*e.g.*, cages, docks, lines) for raising shellfish and/or seaweed.

On-bottom gear: Shellfish cages that sit on the bay bottom and are hauled up by the farmer.

Aquaculture Product Categories

The below graph shows the general product distinction that exists in New York. Shellfish and finfish can be produced for restoration and/or consumption.

69 Responses



Operations may produce for multiple categories (i.e., for restoration AND consumption).

Shellfish for restoration: Includes oyster (single set & spat on shell), hard clam, bay scallop, ribbed mussel, and freshwater mussels (*Unionids*).

Shellfish for consumption: Primarily oyster, but may include hard clam and bay scallops.

Finfish for stocking: Various species for stocking public and private waterbodies.

Finfish for consumption: Various species of fish raised as a food product for people to eat.

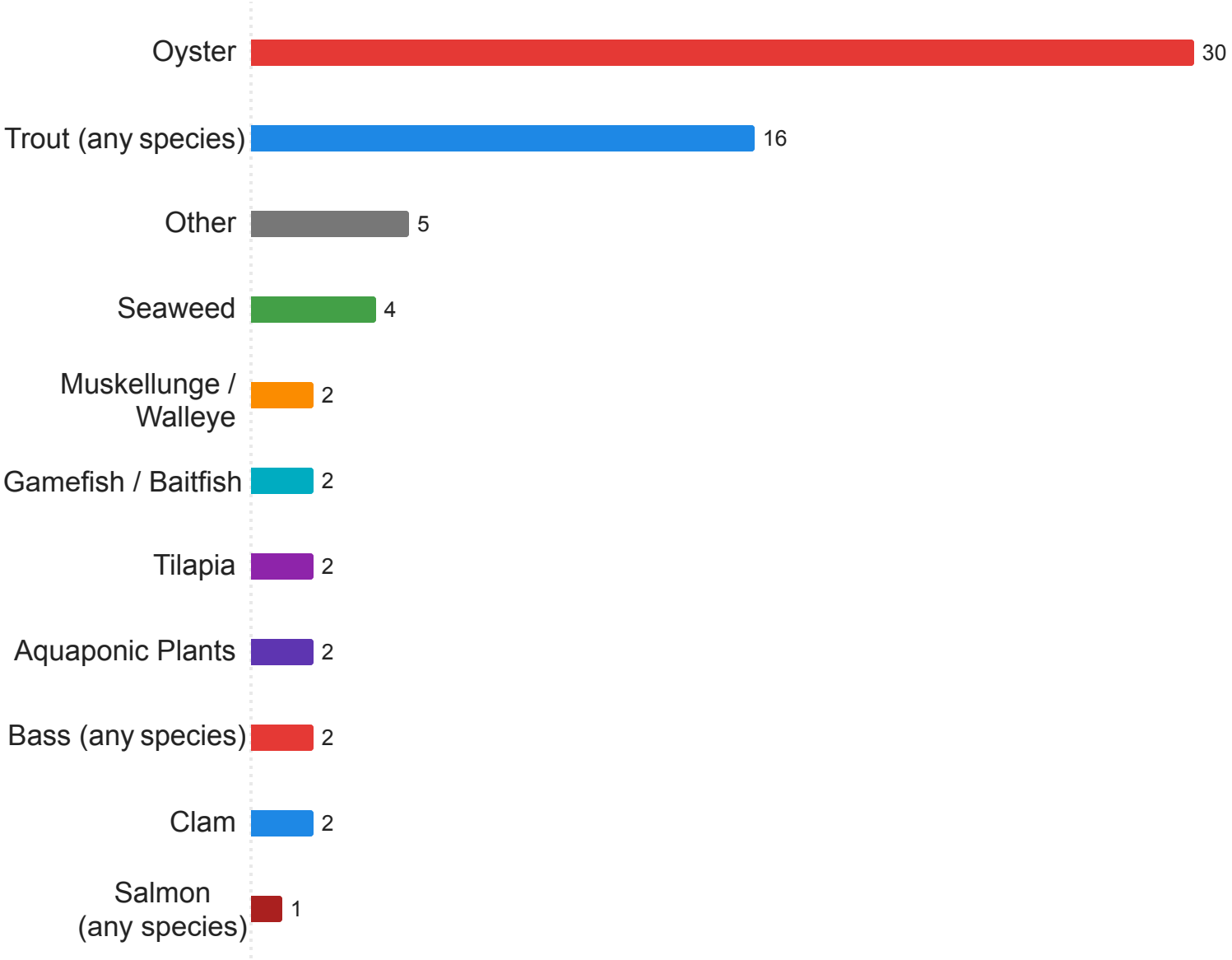
Seaweed: Primarily sugar kelp. Includes hatchery production of seed spools sold to growers.

Aquaponic Plants: Consumable produce (e.g., herbs, lettuce), cannabis, and/or landscaping plants.

Top Species Produced

Survey participants were asked to what species they produced the most of *or* generated the most value.

68 Responses



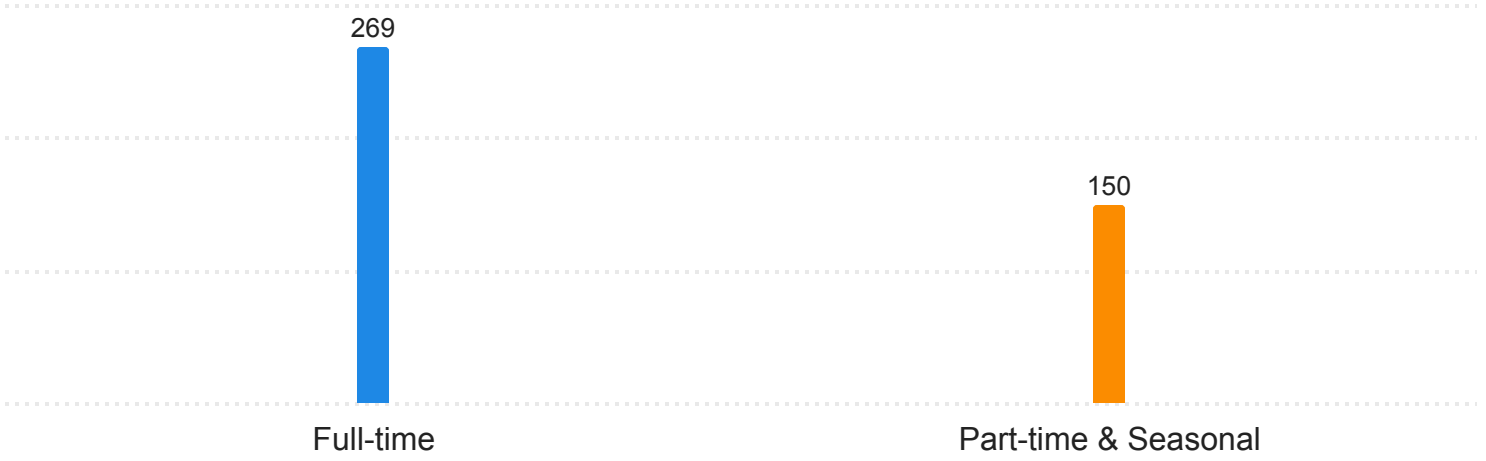
Operations may produce multiple species but this shows which species they produced the most of or which generated the most value. Often this is the same species but some operations may produce larger quantities of smaller species with lower values than other species they also produce.

Trout Species: Such as Brook, Tiger, Brown, Steelhead, and Rainbow.
Other includes: Freshwater mussels (*Unionids*), Cisco, Bloater, and Triploid Grass Carp.
Seaweed: Primarily sugar kelp but researchers are trying *Ulva* (green algae) and *Gracilaria* (red algae).
Salmon Species: Such as Atlantic and Chinook.
Aquaponic Plants: Consumable produce (e.g., herbs, lettuce), cannabis, and/or landscaping plants.
Gamefish / Baitfish: Such as Perch, Bluegill, Crappie, Minnows, Shiners, etc.
Bass Species: Such as large mouth and small mouth bass as well as striped bass (saltwater).

Categories not selected: Shrimp and koi.

Number of Jobs Supported

66 Responses



Full Time: >30 hours per week for >4 months per year.

Part-time & Seasonal: Employed <4 months per year.

Total Production

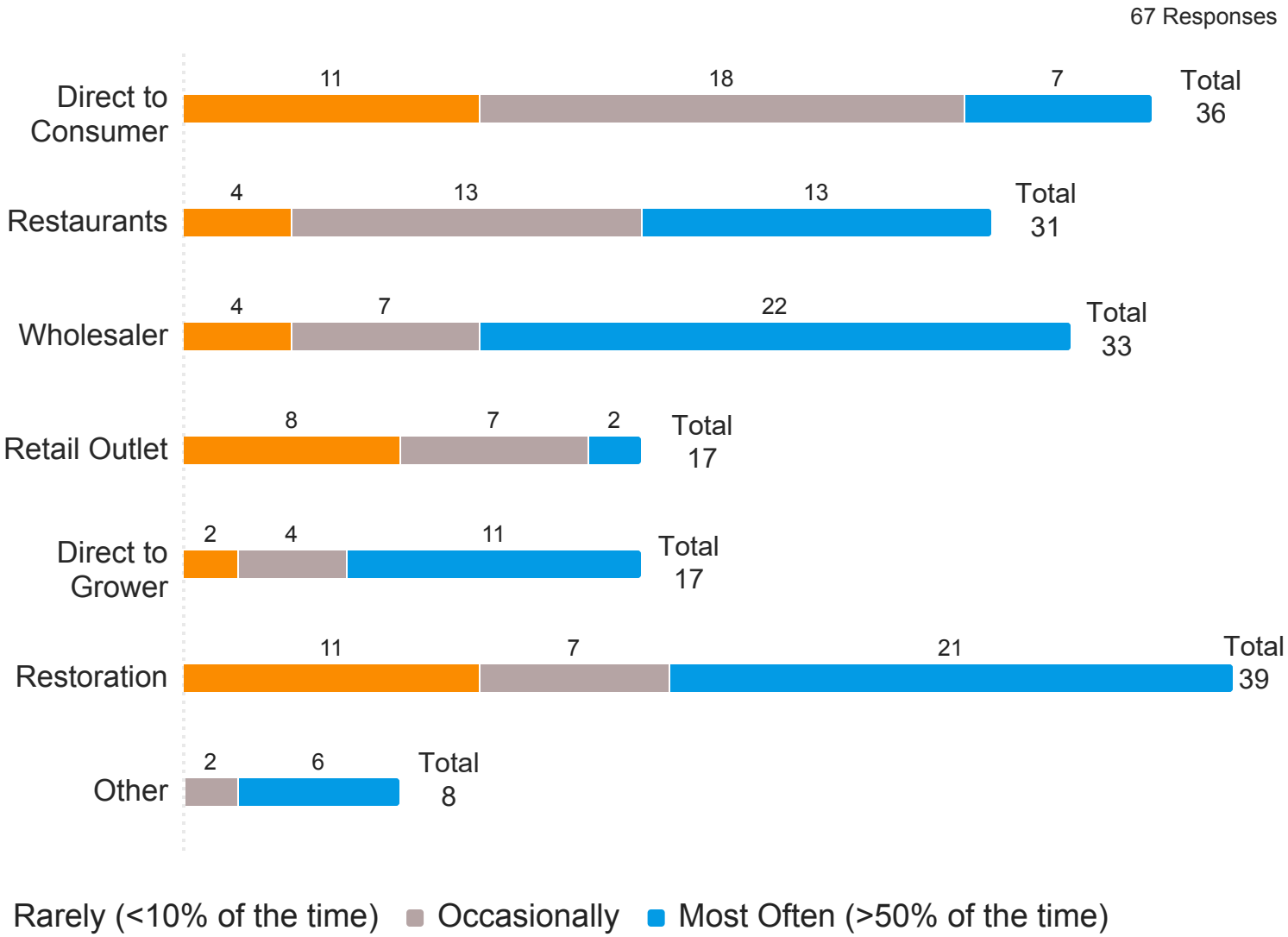
Operations provided an estimate of their total production. The highest amount reported by an operation is listed, along with the average amount reported, the number of responses, and the total sum reported. Operations could report values under multiple categories.

Operation Type	Maximum	Average	Responses	Sum
Shellfish Hatchery (seed)	30,000,000	10,458,869	13	135,965,300
Shellfish Farmers (pieces)	2,000,000	377,859	32	12,091,500
Finfish Hatchery (seed)	220,154,417	12,073,046	19	229,387,872
Finfish Farms (pounds)	1,020,580	100,843	17	1,714,339
Seaweed Nursery (spools)	105	18	10	176
Seaweed Farmers (pounds)	50,000	8,446	9	76,010
Aquaponic Plants (pounds)	500	220	5	1,100

Shellfish Hatchery: Number of seed produced for restoration and/or sold to growers.
Shellfish Farmers: Number of legal size pieces of shellfish sold for consumption (typically) purposes.
Finfish Hatchery: Number of eggs, fry, and/or fingerlings produced from spawns that were sold/stocked.
Finfish Farms: Pounds produced for restoration and/or consumption purposes, includes aquaponics.
Seaweed Nurseries: Number of kelp spools produced.
Seaweed Farmers: Wet pounds of sugar kelp produced and harvested.
Aquaponic Plants: Pounds of consumable produce/terrestrial plants.

Total Production

Survey participants were asked to select the method(s) and frequency used for product distribution.



Direct to Consumer: Selling product directly to individual(s) consuming the product.

Restaurants: Selling directly to restaurants, caterers, food pantries, or other food service companies.

Wholesaler: Selling to a business that distributes (and may process) products to other businesses.

Retail Outlet: Selling directly to a store that sells (and may process) the product to customers.

Direct to a Grower: Selling juvenile shellfish or fish (eggs, fry, fingerlings) to farmers or private pond owners that will raise the product.

Restoration: Putting shellfish seed or fish into public waterbodies to enhance the existing population.

Other: Includes research when the product is not released or sold, dried seaweed as a fertilizer enhancement, trout in the classroom, culinary education, and fish derby events.

Aquaculture and Seafood Resources

New York Sea Grant staff have created a variety of additional resources. To learn more about aquaculture and seafood safety, visit the various links listed below.

New York Sea Grant Aquaculture: www.nyseagrant.org/aquaculture

- New York Aquaculture Fact Sheet: bit.ly/AquacultureFacts
- New York Aquaculture: Status, Updates & Opportunities: bit.ly/Aquaculture_Report
- New York Aquaculture Needs Assessment Summary: bit.ly/NeedsSummary
- New York Aquaculture Needs Assessment Report: bit.ly/NeedsReport

Aquaculture Development in New York website: bit.ly/AquaPWT

Annual New York Seafood Summit Event: www.nyseagrant.org/seafoodsummit

Seafood Processing & Marketing Resources: www.nyseagrant.org/seafoodguides

Seaweed Processing & Marketing Resources: www.nyseagrant.org/seaweedguides

Seafood Marketing and Education: www.nyseagrant.org/seafoodmarketing

- Seafood Nutrition Cards: blogs.cornell.edu/nysgmarketing/nutrition/
- Seafood Marketing Resource Cards: blogs.cornell.edu/nysgmarketing/marketing
- Seafood Safe Handling Resource Cards: blogs.cornell.edu/nysgmarketing/seafood-cards/

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This survey and publication was funded through NOAA Sea Grant: Aquaculture Supplemental award NA24OARX417C0645-T1-01.

New York Sea Grant is part of a nationwide network of 34 university-based programs working with coastal communities through the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Sea Grant research and outreach programs promote better understanding, conservation, and use of America's coastal resources. Sea Grant is funded in New York through SUNY and Cornell University and federally through NOAA.