Full-Time Crawfish Industry Can Be Valuable To State

California is famous for sunshine. Arkansas is renowned for its razorback hogs. But, believe it or not, both of these states are strong on crawfish and, given a little chance, they would move in and crowd Louisiana out of the crawdad market.

Secretary of State Wade O. Martin, Jr., speaking several weeks ago to the state Crawfish Farmers Assn., brought out that this was one of two serious threats to the crawfish industry. The other is the hostility of foreign nations to the importing of U.S. fish products, including the l’ecrevissé de la Louisiane.

And these foreign countries, notably Japan and Mexico, particularly bear an animosity towards the crawfish. They’re exporting whole lobsters, shrimp and other shellfish into the United States, but absolutely refuse to accept our crawfish, whether whole, in pieces, frozen, cooked, or what have you. That’s too bad. They may be holding up a favorable balance of foreign trade, but they’re depriving their people of one of the greatest delicacies in the world.

Martin’s solution to the resistance from foreign seafood markets and competition for domestic markets is to organize a full-time, legitimate crawfish industry. The industry would bring together and standardize the crawfish industry so that it would be a “genuine crawfish business and not just pocket money for a few individuals.”

Such an industry could be prepared against the changes that occur from year to year in any business. So far as crawfish is concerned, scientists are predicting that the current crawfish season will be “one of scarcity.” For crawfish lovers in Louisiana, 1972 was a very good year, but a Southern University biology professor who is conducting research on the crustacean delicacy, says the outlook is bad for the remainder of this season. For one thing, they’re saying that unseasonably high water in the Atchafalaya Basin may diminish the crop by several thousand pounds.

Scientists say they don’t know exactly why, but the annual crawfish harvest fluctuates in yield from year to year, and so do the sizes. That’s not good news for the industry as well as for the people of South Louisiana who look to crawfish-catching as great recreational activity on weekends.

The crawfish industry in the state has advanced to where it now has some 10.2 million pounds valued at $1.5 million. It can be much more than that if Martin’s suggestion is taken to make it a real industry, and if research, such as is being conducted throughout the state, including the University of Southwestern Louisiana, produces tangible findings to work on.