Seafood processors praise regulations

HOUMA, La. (AP) — Seafood processors here are praising new federal safety regulations that they say will strengthen what some have been doing in Louisiana all along.

“Nationally the seafood industry has been besieged with requests by consumers to have regulations like the beef and poultry industry ... as if we were getting away with murder,” said Karl Turner, executive director of the Louisiana Seafood and Marketing Board.

Turner said the seafood industry is already operating under a network of rules and regulations that have been in place for years. He said the new mandate will only enhance the quality of the current system.

The Food and Drug Administration said the new rules released Friday was an attempt to prevent future health problems associated with shellfish and other types of seafood.

Dr. Marilyn Kilgen, a Nicholls State biologist, has worked with two national committees to study the problems of seafood contamination. She says there has been relatively few serious cases of food poisoning caused by seafood in the United States.

“In the last 10 years, there have been 9,000 to 10,000 deaths from all foods, and of that, only 100 to 120 have been deaths related to seafood,” she said.

Kilgen said most of the seafood-related deaths stemmed from raw seafood, eaten by “high-risk” individuals. She identified “high-risk” people as those who have AIDS, cancer, diabetes, ulcers, liver problems or other biological deficiencies that make it difficult to fight off normal bacteria found in foods.