



Friday update



Captain's Blog

October 27, 2017

Challenges and opportunities with new Government

What to make of the new government and its implications for the seafood industry?

There is at least one initial plus – the return to a standalone Fisheries Ministry, to be headed by Hawke's Bay MP Stuart Nash.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was surprisingly direct in announcing the dismembering of the Ministry for Primary Industries – with both fishing and forestry to be carved off – saying there were a “range of issues and dysfunction within the fishing industry”.

She was not specific but there is never a shortage of issues and there is certainly dysfunction around the introduction of digital monitoring and cameras across the entire fleet of some 1200 vessels. The timetable cannot possibly be met, the settings and policies are not in place and now is the time to pause, regroup and get it right.

There has been some early attention to the Kermadecs ocean sanctuary, which Ardern has said is still on the table, while acknowledging iwi consultation is the key.

That is reassuring, as long as it recognises Maori have a perpetual right. Greens leader James Shaw is correct in saying National created the problem by rushing out and announcing the proposed sanctuary to an international audience first, without consulting at home.

In the Media

Seafood export earnings down 1.4 percent – report

Lower wild capture volumes and a strong New Zealand dollar constrained 2017 seafood exports, according to MPI's Situation and Outlook for Primary Industries report.

Seafood export earnings fell 1.4 percent to \$1.7 billion in the year ending June 2017, compared with the year ending June 2016.

Export earnings from wild capture fisheries were down by 3 percent to \$1.3 billion, driven by a 5 percent decrease in volumes due to fluctuations in the catch of key species.

Export earnings from aquaculture rose \$18 million (4.5 percent) to \$406 million for the year ending 2017.

Annual seafood export earnings are expected to bounce back, reaching \$1.85 billion (an increase of 6.2 percent) in 2018 and \$1.93 billion (up 4.5 percent) in 2019. Forecast growth will be underpinned by an expected increase in prices and aquaculture exports.

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The search for missing fisherman Kieran Lynch has been called off. Lynch went missing when the fishing vessel *Wendy J* sunk off the West Coast last month. A period of good weather and visibility allowed police divers to spend a full day searching the vessel and its surrounds. Unfortunately, Lynch's body was not found.

“They then had to work backwards to a resolution,” Shaw said. “And we’re committed to finding a resolution too, but it’s got to be alongside Maori.” Contrast that principled approach with that of former Environment Minister Nick Smith, who still doesn’t appear to get it. He sees the stalled bill to create the sanctuary as a political weapon to be used to divide the Greens and Labour. The fact remains the 620,000 square kilometre Kermadec zone is not at risk. The Kermadecs already have reserve status in that they have been a Benthic Protected Area (BPA) since 2007 at the behest of the fishing industry. That means no trawling, no disturbing of the bottom. Mining and gas and oil extraction are also ruled out. And the territorial seas out to 20km around the Kermadec Islands are fully protected reserves that allow no fishing whatsoever. There is understandable reluctance on the part of iwi and the wider commercial fishing industry to lock up such a vast area forever. A smarter play would be look to the wider Pacific and encourage the island states to better protect their waters and discourage deprecation by large foreign fleets, particularly the heavily subsidised Chinese. Pelagic species like tuna and swordfish know no boundaries and it is not much use having them fully protected 200 miles out from Raoul Island if they are being heavily overfished on their prior migratory path. The confidence and supply agreement between Labour and the Greens has as point 17 of its policy programme: Honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the country’s founding document. The appointment of Kelvin Davis in the new portfolio of Crown/Maori Relations gives heft to that. As everyone knows, Article Two of the Treaty guarantees Maori “full exclusive and undisturbed possession” of their fisheries, reaffirmed in the 1992 Maori Fisheries Settlement. That recognition is consistent with point 8 of the Labour/Greens policy document: Use best endeavours and work alongside Maori to establish the Kermadec/Rangitahua Ocean Sanctuary.... The Labour/NZ First coalition agreement also refers to the Kermadecs, pledging to “work with Maori and other quota holders to resolve outstanding issues in the Kermadec Ocean Sanctuary Bill”. That agreement has several encouraging aspects for the seafood industry, including “recognise the potential for aquaculture in promoting regional economic growth”.

Research that claimed Sea Lion Exclusion Devices (SLEDs) are a “key driver” in the population decline of New Zealand sea lions has been challenged by three experienced scientists. In the *NZ Herald* editorial the experts highlight two major flaws in the Otago University study; incorrect use of data and dismissal of other causes of death. Dr Jim Roberts (Niwa), Dr Simon Childerhouse (Blue Planet Marine), and Professor Wendi Roe (Massey University) said they were “mystified” that the peer review process failed to identify the study’s faulty use of data. Of the 438 dead pups that have been assessed since 2006, 21 percent died of trauma or drowning in mud holes, and 55 percent were killed by infection from bacterium *klebsiella pneumoniae*. The editorial said reducing mortality from the disease would have the greatest positive effect on the population.

The South East Marine Protection Forum (SEMPF) will not be affected by the new Government, chair Maree Baker-Galloway says. The forum was formed by the Department of Conservation and Ministry for Primary Industries to recommend marine protected areas along the South Island’s east coast, between Timaru and the Catlins. Baker-Galloway told *Stuff* the consultation process had been “very challenging”, but everyone would be proud of the result. SEMPF is due to make its recommendations on December 20.

Alaskan electronic monitoring rolling out after years of work

Alaska fishermen will see changes to the mandatory observer programme next year.

After years of requests, testing and prepping, the National Marine Fisheries Service is rolling out a more-complete electronic monitoring program for small boat fishermen who are directed to have partial observer coverage as part of the 2018 observer program.

Developing the system has taken several years, from the 2013 decision to restructure the observer program to 2016, when 51 vessels participated in a pre-implementation program.

The Alaska Longline Fishermen’s Association has been on the forefront of the push for electronic monitoring, working through various iterations of the technology which is now fit for purpose.

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Many regional economies and coastal communities are boosted by aquaculture and fishing, which contribute overall \$4.2 billion to the New Zealand economy and employment, according to a Berl analysis.

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Given the industry invests heavily in science and innovation, proposals to “increase research and development spending to 2 percent of GDP over 10 years” and increasing support for National Science Challenges are also welcome.

The outlook for the seafood sector is bright. Stocks are sustainable, aquaculture is expanding, markets are strong.

MPI’s latest Situation and Outlook predicts seafood exports to rise to \$1.85 billion in 2018 and nudge \$2 billion in 2019.

There will no doubt be tensions at times with the new government but we approach it with confidence and goodwill.

[Read Seafood New Zealand's latest magazine here](#)



Increase in illegal seafood sales on Facebook prompts warning

A significant increase in the number of illegal seafood sales via Facebook has prompted the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) to warn those offending that they will face penalties for violating the Fisheries Act.

Since the beginning of the year, MPI has received more than 160 calls and emails reporting Facebook posts by people selling recreationally caught seafood including crayfish, kina and pāua.

That's up on the previous year where 96 complaints were received and the year before that when 57 complaints were registered.

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