

Aquaculture and the Norway conundrum

In the world of New Zealand aquaculture, there is no avoiding comparing yourself against the standard set by the Norwegians and, in particular, the Norway government's commitment to the industry.

Norway's aquaculture industry is 91 percent farmed salmon and has gone from 100 tonnes in 1971 to 1.3 million tonnes in 2015. They have also halved production time, use 30 percent less feed, reduced the effects on the sea floor, reduced escapes, and developed vaccines so antibiotic use is almost eliminated.

At the Aquaculture New Zealand annual conference in Blenheim yesterday, Fisheries Minister Stuart Nash faced questions about his government's support and the frustration with what the industry saw as the snail's pace of progress.

Nash talked about Fisheries New Zealand's vision for the aquaculture sector, saying the three key points were the governments support for sustainable aquaculture, the work underway to secure the industry's future, and opportunities to grow aquaculture.

"This government is committed to aquaculture. It is part of our coalition agreement with NZ First and we recognise the potential for regional economic growth – and Regional Development Minister Shane Jones is traveling the country talking about how he can use the Provincial Growth Fund to further grow the industry," Nash said.

Fisheries New Zealand is refreshing the government's aquaculture strategy over the next five years. The original strategy launched in 2012 and Nash acknowledged industry frustration with uncertainty around existing farms. He said technology and innovation need to be utilised to mitigate some of the risks that exist in the current environment.

“We are finalising the National Environmental Standards for Marine Aquaculture which aim to provide consistency and efficiency under consenting in the Resource Management Act. We expect a Cabinet decision later this year and implementation in 2019.”

New Zealand King Salmon chief executive Grant Rosewarne argued that he didn't see from this government an end-to-end cohesive strategy for aquaculture in New Zealand, unlike Norway.

Rosewarne said; “There are good intentions, but there is back-sliding and it is extremely difficult to make progress. Norway has a strategy that is well thought through and is being executed brilliantly – it puts us to shame, so what are you going to do about that?”

Nash responded that he had had that discussion with Fisheries New Zealand officials.

“I want to know where we want the industry to be in five years' time and fifty years' time. But it takes a while to develop, let alone to implement and I suspect I will be long gone before the industry reaches the point they're at in Norway,” said Nash.

“I look at the way Norway does its fisheries and it is an exemplar. Norway got to where it is because of massive investment from the government and that is one of the reasons Shane Jones and myself are very keen to see applications from innovative aquaculture players who have done the testing, know their markets and just need start-up capital to get across the line.

“The money is there to do this. I don't know if the money is going to be there in two years' time. Very rarely do you get a \$3 billion blank cheque so if anyone is doing innovative stuff in aquaculture get your application in soon because my very real concern is that applications in June 2020 will be too late.”



A hands-on approach for hoki

The New Zealand fishing industry has taken a proactive approach to managing hoki on the West Coast.

Although its been a particularly good hoki season in the Cook Strait, Chatham Rise and the Sub-Antarctic, members of the industry have observed fewer numbers of the fish in one of five hoki fishing grounds.

In response, the industry has decided to act for the wellbeing of the fishery by voluntarily shelving 20,000 tonnes of West Coast hoki quota – a 22 percent catch reduction.

Fishing during spawning periods or in areas with an abundance of juveniles will also temporarily stop.

The change will come into effect on October 1 with no carryover of uncaught West Coast quota from the 2017/2018 fishing year.

The remaining four hoki grounds are still fishing well.

The decision to shelve is a precautionary tool that enables the industry to respond quickly to stock fluctuations.

According to Te Ohu Kaimoana chief executive Dion Tuuta, it's a "significant undertaking by the industry".

With ocean temperatures in the South of New Zealand reaching a historical high this winter, climate change is a suspected factor of fewer hoki in the region.

Chief executive of Sanford Volker Kuntzsch said there's been an unusual pattern of warmer water temperatures in the Tasman Sea over the last 18 months that could be causing hoki to change their behaviour.

Tuuta also noted the temperature shift.

"We have noticed some warmer water temperatures this season, but we are waiting for science to catch up and tell us what is going on out there," he said.

The Ministry for Primary Industries and scientists will be conducting assessments to provide firm answers.

General manager of Sealord Doug Paulin commended the industry on its response.

"We prefer to be conservative in our approach so that we can have a positive influence on the hoki fishery and give it the strongest future. It is extremely positive and significant to have everyone working together in this way."

Iwi, who own 40 percent of New Zealand's hoki quota, were also supportive of the decision. Tuuta explained that both iwi and industry equally want a more sustainable and abundant fish population and the collaborative decision to reduce catch reflects that.

"Their livelihoods depend upon sustainability," he said.

Andrew Talley of Talley's Group acknowledged the industry's commitment to sustainable practices as outlined in the industry's Code of Conduct.

"Adopting this precautionary approach with industry leaders demonstrates our ability to move quickly when we believe the need is there. We have supported the Promise Campaign by the wider New Zealand seafood industry. This is a demonstration of that commitment in real time."

Plans to establish the North Island's first offshore finfish farm is underway.

Aquaculture group Pare Hauraki Kaimoana will be applying for resource consent to place a kingfish farm in the Firth of Thames after receiving authority from Waikato Regional Council.

If granted, it will be New Zealand's first commercial kingfish species.

The farm proposes to occupy 240 hectares of space in the Coromandel Marine Farming Zone, located 10 kilometres offshore of Coromandel Town.

The zone was established in 2011 by a central government amendment after strong interest in farming hāpuku and kingfish in the area. Only now have aquaculture groups shown renewed interest.

As the successful bidders of the tender process, Pare Hauraki Kaimoana will have two years to prepare for and submit their application for resource consent.

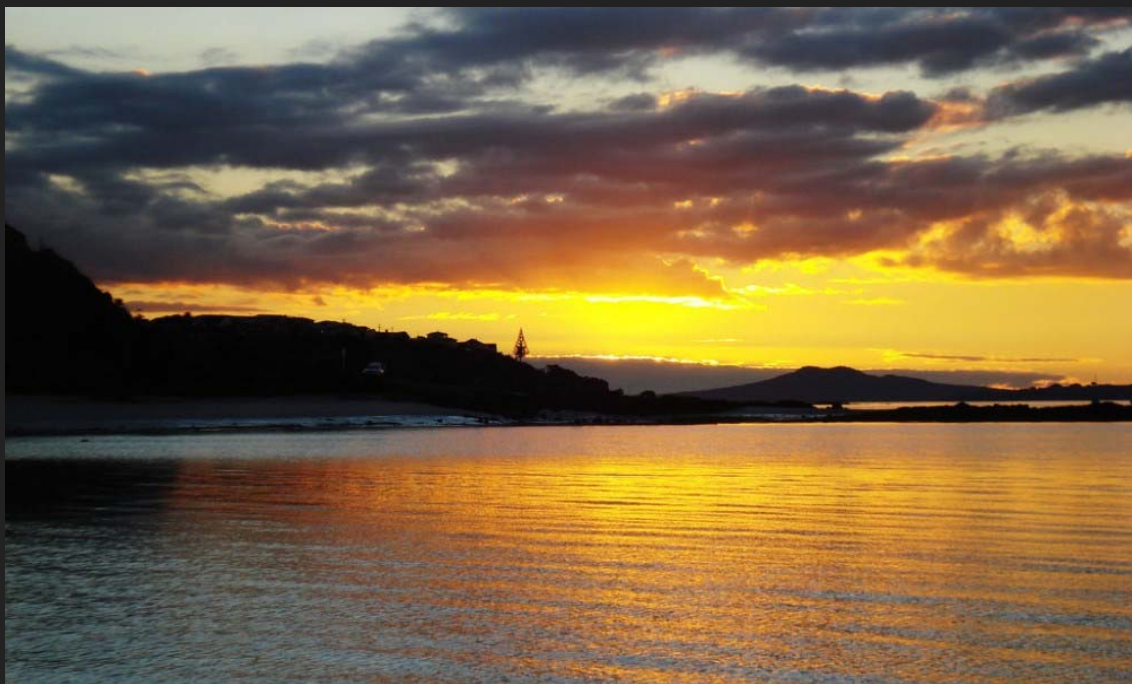
Waikato council chief executive Vaughan Payne is looking forward to the benefits the farm could bring to the community.

"Pare Hauraki Kaimoana are already a major player in our regional aquaculture industry and their tender proposal demonstrated a deep commitment to achieving environmental, economic and social outcomes for the region," he said.

The district's current aquaculture industry generates just under \$100 million of revenue each year and employs more than 550 people.

Thames-Coromandel constituency councillor Dal Minogue believes the kingfish farm would add significant value to that figure.

"It's exciting to think that, over time, successful fish farming in the Coromandel Marine Farming Zone could generate additional revenue of more than \$50 million and dozens of full time jobs through expansion and diversification of the regional aquaculture industry."



Mike Mandeno appointed to mussel farming manager of Sanford

Seafood Innovations Limited general manager Mike Mandeno has resigned after five years in the role.

Mike has accepted a position with Sanford Ltd as mussel farming manager, based in Havelock. His appointment will commence at the end of January.

Mike has been key in supporting the development of the New Zealand seafood industry through science and research and will bring a wide scope of knowledge to Sanford.

The SIL board will be moving quickly to find a replacement for him, but from an industry perspective business will continue as usual at SIL.

News

Sixty percent of fishing crew who have seen Maritime NZ's and NZ Federation of Commercial Fishermen's safety campaign have started making changes to improve safety. The Safe Crews Fish More campaign began in June 2017 with the aim of reducing accidents on fishing boats. Maritime NZ director Keith Manch believes the results so far suggest it is having a positive impact. Manch said workers who had received health and safety training in the previous 12 months reported fewer serious harm and near miss incidents and had improved knowledge of health and safety. The most common action taken by employers to improve safety on board was identifying and resolving hazards. "Half of workers report having health and safety training in the last year, which given the relationship between training and improved safety is good news. However, that also means half did not have training. Good work is being done and we need to do more," said Manch.

Seafood company North Island Mussels Ltd has been fined more than \$200,000 in the Tauranga District Court, for a chemical splash that left an employee without an eye. The company has also been ordered to pay repatriation of \$60,000 for the incident which occurred in January 2017. WorkSafe said the employee had been decanting a cleaning product when a piece of tubing flicked him in the eye. According to Worksafe, the employee should not have been decanting the product and said a safer system would have avoided the situation all together. A subsequent investigation had uncovered several health and safety failings by the company. North Island Mussels Limited apologised for the incident and for any emotional damage caused. "For all of us, this incident has really brought home the importance of keeping ourselves and our people safe," the company said. Several changes to workplace safety have been instigated since the accident.

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