

Aquaculture and Fisheries Policy

INTRODUCTION

National is committed to ensuring the sustainability of our fisheries for the benefit of all New Zealanders – recreational, customary, and commercial fishers alike.

We recognise the birthright of each and every New Zealander to be able to enjoy recreational fishing with success, and we will protect that heritage for future generations.

National is committed to the Quota Management System (QMS) as the best way to manage the vast majority of New Zealand's fish species to ensure sustainable utilisation. Furthermore, we acknowledge that the integrity of the Māori Fisheries Settlement rests on property rights which underpin the QMS. Unfortunately, a shift in recent years away from the 'sustainable utilisation' approach to fisheries management has undermined the QMS and created unnecessary bureaucracy and cost, as well as frustration, for all fishers. National will work with the sector to reduce bureaucracy and improve the management of our shared fisheries.

National views the aquaculture industry as a great example of Kiwi businesses making the most of our natural resources with cutting-edge research and development. We believe that aquaculture has billion-dollar potential as an export earner, but recent development in the industry has been disappointing. We will improve the legislative framework that governs the industry to ensure that aquaculture can reach its potential.

MINISTRY OF FISHERIES

Staff numbers, particularly in the Ministry's Wellington head office, have rocketed under Labour. Meanwhile, the core business of fisheries stock monitoring, biosecurity, enforcement, and prosecution has not measurably improved. In the five years to 2007, the number of employees in the Ministry of Fisheries ballooned by 134, while the number of fisheries officers on the frontline increased by just 23, and the number of honorary fisheries officers fell by 76.

The Ministry's own annual report states that the customary fishing catch is unknown, and it is widely acknowledged that catch estimates of all our key recreational species are poor.

It is appalling that:

- Fisheries officers refuse to work in some areas because they fear for their safety.
- Fish thieves continue to escape justice.
- The Ministry estimates that half the paua catch and almost 20% of the crayfish catch remains illegal.

National will:

Remove all administrative, operational, or policy focus that is unnecessary for the sustainable utilisation of the fishery and direct those resources into:

- Bolstering the research and monitoring of fish stock health.
- Improving frontline fishery officer policing, with a focus on combating poaching.

MARINE RESERVES AND PROTECTED AREAS

National wants fishers to have a greater role in decisions about the development and gazetting of new marine reserves, recreation-only reserves, and other protected marine areas.

We strongly support the use of marine reserves for biodiversity protection. However, we want a balanced approach that sees the creation of protected marine areas that enjoy public support, both locally and nationally.

National will:

- Amend the Marine Reserves Act to prevent DOC being both the applicant and decision-maker over marine reserves.
- Give fishers a direct say in the decisions and location of marine reserves.

EMISSIONS TRADING SCHEME

Labour's emissions trading scheme will add significantly to the costs of the fishing industry. Fuel is a major cost in operating boats, and the scheme's additional burden will undermine the viability of the New Zealand fishing fleet. National sees it as unfair that a 90% allocation of carbon credits is available to all other trade-exposed sectors such as steel, cement, and aluminium manufacturing, and for the dairy industry, yet only 50% is available to the fishing industry. Fishing should be treated the same.

National will:

- Amend the ETS legislation to provide for a 90% allocation to fishing.

SHARED FISHERIES

The chief value of having a healthy recreational fishery shared with the commercial sector is the joy and freedom that every Kiwi family can experience going fishing with success.

Such a heritage can be passed through the generations without diminishing the property rights of commercial fishers who need quota allocation certainty in order to contribute to one of New Zealand's biggest and most important export industries.

A National Government will better manage shared fisheries by honouring the current law's commitment to recreational and customary fishers' foremost allowance, as well as encouraging all sectors to resolve together how best to share the resource.

National will:

- Not introduce any form of recreational fisher licensing.
- Facilitate recreational, customary, and commercial agreement on the location of significant 'recreation-only' fishing reserves as one way of recognising recreational fishing needs.
- Commit to well-resourced survey and monitoring work in order to better quantify the total extent and location of recreational fishing catches.
- Support charter boat operators in developing their own catch recording system solely for the purpose of improving our overall knowledge of recreational catches.

AQUACULTURE

Prior to the reforms of 2004, the aquaculture industry was strangled by years of moratoria. Worse still, since the reforms, no significant Aquaculture Management Area (AMA) has been created where marine farming did not already exist.

The industry cannot be expected to become a billion-dollar industry by 2025, and Māori will not receive their aquaculture settlement, if the industry is not allocated significantly more water space on which to operate.

The Resource Management Act (RMA) needs to be reformed as a top priority to free up marine farmers from many aspects of the RMA-related aquaculture reforms.

National will:

- Improve the legislative framework to ensure certainty for investors so the industry reaches its potential. We will pay full attention to the findings of the industry-led review of the current regulatory environment.
- Allow aquaculture research to be considered outside AMAs.
- Allow farmers to change the species farmed in an area (where two species are broadly similar) without an arduous bureaucratic process.
- Reduce the bureaucracy and cost to applicants who undertake a private plan change to create an AMA.
- Remove the veto of the Conservation Minister over restricted coastal activities
- Continue to support research and development for aquaculture.