



Aquaculture and the new-look Fisheries New Zealand

A new government unit tasked with representing the aquaculture industry will focus on improving efficiency and certainty around planning and management, as well as biosecurity and innovation measures.

The Fisheries New Zealand unit announced recently, was created by Fisheries Minister Stuart Nash to oversee aquaculture, as well as wild-capture fishing, and in-part bring effect to the coalition agreement between Labour and New Zealand First to 'recognise the potential for aquaculture in promoting regional economic growth'.

The stand alone unit sits within the Ministry for Primary Industries, and is an acknowledgement that aquaculture makes a significant contribution to many communities, Mr Nash said.

"I am determined to see our aquaculture team build on the existing strong connections with industry players, Māori interests, local councils, environmental groups and other government agencies – especially the Department of Conservation and Ministry for the Environment," he said.

Staff are located in Nelson,

Whangarei and Wellington and will continue their busy work in these places and around the country. Nelson is the major regional hub for aquaculture and the staff want to remain well connected and accessible, he said.

"The Government's priority for aquaculture is to support the sustainable development of the industry and make sure its economic and social benefits are well understood," Mr Nash said.

"A key focus for officials is the National Environmental Standard for Marine Aquaculture (NES). This is a crucial piece of work to provide more guidance to councils and the industry on planning for and managing aquaculture around the country.

"The proposed NES aims to provide greater investment certainty by making the process for re-consenting existing marine farms more consistent and efficient. The uncertainty and cost associated with replacing existing resource consents reduces the industry's confidence to invest in innovation."

Mr Nash said he was looking forward to making decisions on the NES later in 2018, with a view to

having it in place in 2019.

"It will enable industry to continue to make a valuable contribution to the economy as well as build on its global brand."

Biosecurity also remains a top priority.

"The aquaculture team in Fisheries New Zealand will work across MPI, with industry and councils, to improve biosecurity practices on and off farm," he said.

"Another focus is the need to encourage innovation to grow the value of aquaculture products, and to ensure an adaptable, resilient and future-focused industry. Research and trials into new farming systems, novel species, and selective breeding will help position the industry to face the challenges of the future.

"There are plenty of challenges too. Climate change, marine integrated management, market demands for transparency and environmental reporting will all require close attention. There will be increasing pressure on our shared resources. This may drive aquaculture growth in different directions, to novel products or technologies." ■



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