



REVIEW OF THE LAND-BASED AQUACULTURE REGIME

Aquaculture is the world's fastest growing primary sector with land-based aquaculture contributing to more than half of the world's freshwater fish production.

Land-based aquaculture is the farming of both freshwater and marine species above the high tide mark. Species include amur (grass and silver carp), salmon, freshwater crayfish/koura, oysters and paua.

New Zealand's land-based aquaculture is relatively undeveloped compared with other primary industries. However, there is potential for this sector to grow and opportunity for a sustainable long-term industry. Growth would increase food and protein production, create employment, and provide valuable export and domestic earnings to the economy.

This factsheet provides information about a review of the land-based aquaculture regime.

The review begins in early 2013, and any changes will be in place in 2014.

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) and the Department of Conservation (DOC) will jointly lead this review.

The scope of the review will focus on two key areas:

- » transfer and/or release of aquatic life under section 26ZM of the Conservation Act 1987 and the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations 1983; and
- » licensing and registration of land-based farms under the Freshwater Fish Farming Regulations 1983.

WHY REVIEW THE LAND-BASED AQUACULTURE REGIME?

Industry estimates that land-based aquaculture has the potential to grow to approximately \$37 million annual sales in the next three to four years. This figure could grow to approximately \$270 million annual sales by 2025.

Initial investigations by MPI and DOC have identified problems with the current regime, as well as opportunities for improvement. Processes around establishing and operating land-based fish farms are complex, outdated, often difficult to interpret, and likely to discourage investment in the industry.

The sector will develop, with the support of an improved legislative and regulatory regime, the ability to access more species, and develop known growing areas, as well as improved farming technology by industry. Any growth must be sustainable with appropriate controls to manage environmental and biosecurity risks.

Government is committed to enabling our aquaculture industry to achieve its goal of \$1 billion in annual sales by 2025.

Government, through *the Aquaculture Strategy and Five-year Action Plan* supports well-planned and sustainable aquaculture growth in New Zealand. It is essential that legislation and policy on the establishment and operation of land-based aquaculture are effective and responsible, and enables industry investment.

There is a high level of Māori interest in land-based aquaculture for customary, economic and environmental reasons. Potential also exists for other primary industries to diversify and use land-based aquaculture to mitigate environmental impacts.

A more effective regime for land-based aquaculture will also contribute to the growth of marine aquaculture and wild fisheries. Land-based aquaculture currently produces stock for on-growing on marine farms and for wild fisheries enhancement, and this is likely to expand in the future.

SHORTCOMINGS OF THE CURRENT REGIME

Initial investigations have identified the following shortcomings of the current land-based aquaculture regime:

- » Duplication of assessments and authorisations to set up a new farm; leading to increased costs and delays.
- » The Freshwater Fish Farming Regulations 1983 are outdated and difficult to interpret.
- » The 14-year term of a fish farm license affects investment incentives and is out of step with the RMA that has a maximum of 35 years for marine farms.
- » Different processes to manage the transfer of farmed species may result in unnecessary operating costs and delays.
- » The need for greater focus on "fit for purpose" biosecurity and compliance management.

SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

The main objective of the review is to improve the process from applying to establish a land-based farm through to, and including farm operations. The review will focus on two areas:

1. SECTION 26ZM OF THE CONSERVATION ACT 1987 AND THE FRESHWATER FISHERIES REGULATIONS 1983

DOC will lead a review of section 26ZM to assess, where appropriate, the conservation risk when transferring and releasing aquatic life on and off land-based farms. MPI and DOC will also look to identify duplications between agencies' authorisations and assessments, and work towards a streamlined process that removes unnecessary costs and delays to industry.

Specific objectives are to:

- » identify improvements to section 26ZM and provide better clarity around “freshwater” as defined in the Conservation Act;
- » remove duplications between section 26ZM and the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations.

2. LICENSING AND REGISTRATION

MPI will lead a review of the need to amend or retain the Freshwater Fish Farming Regulations, or replace with a “fit for purpose” alternative that encourages investment and growth, while managing biosecurity and compliance risks.

MPI will also look at the range of species that can be farmed, access to broodstock, and managing biosecurity, compliance, and conservation risks.

Specific objectives are to:

- » Investigate whether the Freshwater Fish Farming Regulations 1983 should be removed, or retained and improved.
- » Identify options to remove or retain fish farm licensing, together with options to register all aquaculture farms (land-based and marine farms).
- » Investigate appropriate “fit for purpose” record-keeping and reporting.
- » Review the range of approved species that can be farmed (currently provided through a Gazette Notice).
- » Review procedures to provide access to broodstock;
- » Review the need to maintain stock transfer provisions, while managing risk of pests and diseases, and maintaining genetic diversity.

The review will not propose changes to the RMA 1991, Fisheries Act 1996 and Biosecurity Act 1993.

ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Input into the review by Māori and stakeholders is vital and will ensure the review considers a wide range of options to improve the land-based aquaculture regime.

WILL THE REVIEW CONSIDER THE FARMING OF TROUT?

No. The review will not consider the farming of trout for aquaculture purposes.

TIMEFRAMES

Date (estimate only at this stage)	Activity
March 2013 (and ongoing)	Initial engagement with Māori and stakeholders
March-May 2013	Gathering and formulation of data/ideas for improvements
July-August 2013	Start public consultation on options
End of 2013	Decision on new regime signed off by Ministers
2014	Implementation of changes

RELEVANT INFORMATION AND LINKS

Conservation Act 1987 – Section 26ZM
www.legislation.govt.nz

Freshwater Fisheries Regulations 1983
www.legislation.govt.nz

Freshwater Fish Farming Regulations 1983
www.legislation.govt.nz

Government’s Aquaculture Strategy and 5-year Action Plan
www.fish.govt.nz

Recent aquaculture reforms
www.fish.govt.nz

Gazette Notice specifying fish species which may be farmed (2012)
www.dia.govt.nz

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