



November 2025

Proposed amendments to commercial fishing regulations – Questions and Answers during consultation

FNZ has received a range of questions during the consultation on ‘proposed amendments to commercial fishing regulations’. This document provides further information to help answer frequently asked questions.

Proposal 2: Amendments to the prohibition on the sale of certain non-QMS species taken from the Auckland Fisheries Management Area (FMA)

What is being proposed?

The proposal is to allow trawl, bottom longline, and Danish seine operators to sell 19 ‘reef fish’ species if the fish were taken in FMAs 1 and 9 (Auckland FMA).

Why is this being proposed?

Currently, 19 ‘reef fish’ species cannot be sold if taken in FMAs 1 and 9 (Auckland FMA), regardless of the method by which they were taken. The prohibition on selling these species was introduced in 1993 to discourage set netting on reefs. This was put in place to protect ‘reef fish’ species from being depleted when actively targeted on reef habitats.

These ‘reef fish’ are also found in habitats outside of reefs, such as soft sediments, where they are currently caught in small quantities as bycatch of other fishing methods (e.g. Danish seine, trawl, and bottom longline) and then returned to the sea dead. The proposal has been put forward to allow commercial fishers to retain and sell ‘reef fish’ species inadvertently caught as bycatch using Danish seine, trawl, and bottom longline methods only. These methods cannot typically be used on reef habitats.

What is this proposal aiming to achieve?

The proposal would offer commercial fishers an opportunity to sell ‘reef fish’ species that are taken as bycatch when targeting other species and using Danish seine, trawl, and bottom longline methods only. The prohibition on the sale of these species caught using set nets in FMAs 1 and 9 would remain, consistent with the intent of the original regulation. As well as reducing the quantity of fish that would otherwise be returned to

the sea dead, which is perceived as wasteful, this would allow fishers to derive a small amount of additional income.

Are there any risks to ‘reef fish’ populations from this proposal? How would these be managed?

FNZ acknowledges that if catch markedly increased because of the proposed changes, this may present a sustainability risk, particularly given the long lived, resident, and low productivity nature of some of these largely reef dwelling species.

If this proposed change is approved, FNZ would monitor catch of the species in question as well as fishing activity. FNZ does not expect catches to increase under this proposal, as it is considered unfeasible to target reef fish with these three fishing methods. Further management action would be considered if catch were to increase significantly relative to historical catch data and/or baseline information collected since the introduction of on-board cameras.

Proposal 5: providing for dead marlin caught by commercial fishers in monitored fisheries to be landed

Will marlin be brought into the Quota Management System (QMS)?

No – there is no proposal to bring marlin into the QMS. FNZ is seeking feedback on a proposal to allow commercial fishers to retain dead marlin, caught as bycatch, in monitored fisheries only.

What is this proposal aiming to achieve?

The proposal aims to address the perceived wastage that occurs when returning dead fish to the sea¹. Allowing commercial fishers to retain and sell bycaught marlin that are dead would provide a small utilisation opportunity for commercial fishers. The intent of this proposal is not to incentivise or create a target fishery for marlin.

How can we be sure commercial fishers will only land dead marlin (how will this be monitored)?

The proposal is to allow commercial fishers to land dead marlin in monitored fisheries only, where they are caught as bycatch. This would only include vessels with observers on board or on-board cameras, where the life-status of marlin could be verified.

¹ Almost all marlins taken by commercial fishing vessels are caught by the surface longline fleet, where they comprise a small component of the catch (0.3% based on observer data recorded between the 2018/19 and 2020/21 fishing years). In the approximately 18-month period following the rollout of onboard cameras on the surface longline fleet in January 2024, 20 vessels have recorded returning 635 marlin, with an estimated total weight of around 50 tonnes.

What would happen if increased catches of marlin were detected? How would this be detected?

FNZ has a long time-series of historical marlin captures to compare against, meaning any increases would be detected and managed appropriately. In addition, observer data estimates approximately three quarters of striped marlin are alive when they reach the vessel. Therefore, we would be able to detect changes in marlin catch and/or the life status of marlin in relation to the quantities and ratios previously reported. If significant changes were identified, further management action to limit catch or reduce incentives for commercial fishers to catch marlin would be considered.

If commercial fishers are able to retain and sell dead marlin, does this mean they can target marlin?

No, the restrictions on taking marlin would still apply, including the requirement to return live fish. The intent of this proposal is not to incentivise or create a target fishery for marlin.

How can we be sure that this will not result in fishers trying to catch more marlin?

As noted in the consultation document, FNZ would closely monitor commercial marlin catch as well as fishing activity that results in marlin catch. Only those commercial fishers operating in monitored fisheries (monitored through either observers on board or camera monitoring) would be allowed to retain and sell dead marlin. Footage review and/or observers would be able to identify changes in fishing behaviour. If significant changes were identified, further management action would be considered.