

The Potential Relocation of Salmon Farms in the Marlborough Sounds

Summary of Oral Submission

Aquaculture New Zealand is the voice of the New Zealand aquaculture industry. We support the principles of the proposed relocations and support New Zealand salmon as an industry that all Kiwis can be proud of. As an organisation and an industry, we value strong communities, a healthy environment, and healthy sustainable food.

There is strong public support for aquaculture for these reasons. Public perceptions research shows that the majority of Marlborough residents support sustainable aquaculture growth, feel positive about the industry and recognise it as a sustainable form of food production, a provider of local jobs and a significant contributor to the local economy¹.

The industry as a whole has current annual sales of over \$500 million per year, and we have a goal of reaching \$1 billion per year by 2025. Our growth strategy comprises a ten-point plan which seeks growth through innovation, collaboration, higher value markets, and efficiencies as well as additional space. In all respects this growth is to be delivered in a way that brings social benefits, cultural benefits and with the lightest possible touch on the environment.

We directly employ over 3,000 people primarily in regional communities with at least 850 of these in Marlborough². Each of these people have families that they support and communities that they are part of. We want to see these families and communities continue to thrive – and the proposed relocations will enable just that.

Aquaculture is a global reality and a key contributor to the future of food security; producing a significant proportion of high quality animal protein consumed each year, all from less than its proportionate share of primary raw materials.

Aquaculture is a particularly light form of food production – particularly when you consider how healthy the products are. This is evident in the increasing demand for farm raised seafood worldwide– which is fuelled not just by the growing global population but also the ever-growing demand for food choices that contribute positively to our overall health and wellbeing³.

The benefits of consuming oily fish such as salmon are well recognised – for healthy brains,

¹ Colmar Brunton (2014) Public Perceptions of New Zealand's Aquaculture Industry

² NZIER (2015) The Economic Contribution of Marine Farming in the Marlborough Region

³ FAO (2016) The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2016

hearts and skin⁴⁵. We believe that unfounded scaremongering around apparent contaminants does more harm than good for Kiwis who are looking for healthier food choices grown right here in their backyard. Our salmon is great, we should love it and be proud of it.

In terms of sustainability, New Zealand salmon is the first farmed salmon in the world which has been recognised as a best choice by the esteemed and independent Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch programme⁶.

In order to ensure that our sustainability values are in line with those of our communities we have recently launched the A+ sustainable management programme for each of the three main aquaculture species. A+ has a suite of sustainability objectives, management practices and key performance indicators as well as a programme of reporting and independent assessment. A copy of the salmon A+ is available to download at <http://www.aplusaquaculture.nz/farmers-information>

It is important to remember that all forms of food production have impacts on the environment as much as we seek to minimise these. The impacts that salmon farming has on the Marlborough Sounds environment that we all value need to be considered in the broader context of all the other impacts and uses within that space. There is compelling evidence that in context of other anthropogenic effects, such as ocean acidification, climate change, sedimentation and sewage discharges, the scale of the effects from salmon farming are minor⁷.

Regardless, the expert reports clearly indicate that relocation of the selected farms would have clear environmental benefits.

There are some views that New Zealand could transfer its salmon industry into land-based or closed containment systems and that this would reduce its environmental footprint further. However, the technology for these systems is still in its infancy and not a viable option for the highly valued fish that we grow here. Furthermore, life cycle analysis of these systems indicates clearly that the increase in material and energy demands for such systems may result significantly in increased contribution to several wider scale environmental impacts. These include global warming, non-renewable resource depletion and ocean acidification.

If we accept that we need to continue to produce good quality, healthy food, and we want that food to be produced here in New Zealand rather than imported from overseas, the best solution is to enable aquaculture to operate in areas that provide the most efficient way of growing at the lowest net environmental and social impact with the current technology. The salmon relocation proposal will enable just this.

The RMA s360 process was designed to encourage best practice planning for aquaculture

⁴ FAO/WHO (2011) Report of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on the Risks and Benefits of Fish Consumption

⁵ VKM (2014). Benefit-risk assessment of fish and fish products in the Norwegian diet – an update.

⁶ Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch (2014) New Zealand Chinook Salmon

⁷ NIWA (2012) Assessment of Anthropogenic Threats to New Zealand Marine Habitats

by transferring some of the cost burden on councils and ratepayers while ensuring evidence based decision making, public participation and robust cost/benefit analysis. We support the appropriateness and robustness of the process to date.

We particularly support RMA processes which use extensive peer reviewed expertise to guide planning to a level where there is confidence that consent by consent processes can be streamlined and efficient. In contrast, we discourage planning via extensive case by case hearings and court processes with undemocratic judge-made decisions. These become a perverse use of rate-payer and community resources as well as an opportunity cost for industry contribution to proactive environmental projects, research, monitoring and innovation.

There is an opportunity now to ensure that the ratio of effects from salmon farming, in correspondence to the wide-ranging benefits can be even more reduced through the proposed relocations. A better operating environment as provided by a relocation from low flow to high flow waters allows more efficient and environmentally sustainable production, a healthier industry and a healthier community.

Attached Reports

- Colmar Brunton (2014) Public Perceptions of New Zealand's Aquaculture Industry
- NZIER (2015) The Economic Contribution of Marine Farming in the Marlborough Region
- Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch (2014) New Zealand Chinook Salmon
- NIWA (2012) Assessment of Anthropogenic Threats to New Zealand Marine Habitats
- AQNZ Oral Submission – Extracts (FAO, FAO/WHO, VKM)