

19 May 2017

**re: Updated disease assessment report**

To whom it may concern,

I understand that during the course of hearings relating to proposals to relocate salmon farms in the Marlborough Sounds, New Zealand, assertions have been made that I was unaware of continued mortalities at both the Waihinou and Ruakaka farms, in particular over the years since 2014. I understand that it has been suggested that the mortality rates either were not reported to the authorities or advised to myself when I was preparing my report entitled Updated Disease Risk Assessment Report - Relocation of Salmon Farms in Marlborough Sounds (dated 7 September, 2016), or that my report did not properly record and identify the actual causes of continued high rates of mortalities, or address their significance in terms of sustainability of salmon farming in Pelorus Sound, or in terms of risk to other fauna.

Firstly I must point out that my report is not a disease diagnostic report, but instead is a risk assessment, hence identification of the causes of any mortalities of cultured salmon that may or may not be occurring in the Marlborough Sounds at any given time are well outside the scope of such a document as diagnostics are the responsibility of the fish health staff and veterinarians at the farms as well as the New Zealand Government diagnostic laboratories. I was in contact with MPI staff involved with diagnostics at that time and consider I was appropriately advised for the purposes of the risk assessment. The role of a risk assessment is to address the significance of such disease outbreaks in terms of sustainability of salmon farming in Pelorus Sound, as well as in terms of risk to other fauna.

Regarding the latter topic, I reiterate the same message from the risk assessment report that the proposal to move several salmon farms from low flow sites to more suitable sites with higher water flow would improve the environmental conditions to which cultured salmon are exposed. This would reduce both the risk of outbreaks of non-infectious diseases, and mitigate significant risk factors for emergence of infectious diseases like the NZ-RLO at suboptimal sites. The reality is, emergence of bacterial diseases in cultured fish are almost without exception an indicator those fish are being exposed to suboptimal environmental conditions, and therefore any efforts to improve environmental conditions will reduce the risk of bacterial disease, especially if these efforts are made in conjunction with implementation of effective biosecurity arrangements. Therefore, unless there are new diseases that have emerged since 7 September 2016 that were not assessed in the risk assessment, I see no valid reason to change the conclusions of that report at this time.

Sincerely,



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