



## Innovation rewards fish and fisher

Innovation has helped a Napier fishing company earn more while catching less.

Karl Warr and his wife Sarah trawl the inshore fisheries out of Napier, targeting gurnard and flatfish, and over the years they've reduced the size of their catch while increasing its value.

The key to their success has been fitting their net with a stainless steel cage developed by Karl that allows juvenile and undersized fish to escape.

Along the way they've been able to create a high-value market for their fish, with a strong ethical selling point, and they've shortened the supply chain by working directly with their customers.

Their work saw them named 2017 finalists in the international Seafood Champion Awards for Innovation.

"One of the problems I find with bottom trawling is, while it's a very efficient way of catching fish, it's not terribly selective," says Karl. "So my work has focused on trying to create apertures in the net that favour the release of small fish during the tow."

It means fish are released unharmed at depth and don't suffer the barometric trauma of being brought to the surface, which is often fatal, he says.

"Bringing fish to the surface and then deciding whether you want them or not is far less desirable than releasing them down in their habitat to carry on and do their thing."



The cage is made of smooth stainless steel, which doesn't pinch or damage the fish as they escape, and it filters fish on the basis of shape and size.

He says he's seen a dramatic drop in the number of undersized fish he catches; about 90% less small round fish, like gurnard and cod, and about 70% less small elliptical fish, like trevally, terakihi and snapper.

The way the cage works also saves money.

"Because the mechanism flies off the bottom it's not wearing out, so the longevity of it saves costs. It's very efficient at passing water through, so saves a bit of fuel. But most significantly, it allows us to produce a much better quality product. It gives us a point of sale difference when we're marketing our fish and allows us to compete more effectively in the marketplace."

Their customers are a mix of private consumers and commercial restaurants who want to know they are eating fish caught ethically. The pair believe that's the key to cracking the international market; better quality fish that are caught with care.

Along the way they're hoping to turn around the reputation of trawl fishing. "It would be nice to take probably the most frowned upon fishing method in the world and make it one of the most celebrated," says Karl.

Karl and Sarah are happy to share their experience with other fishers, who can find them through Facebook at "[Better Fishing](#)" or in the Napier phone book.

### **Your fisheries – your say**

Fisheries New Zealand is consulting now on proposals to reshape, improve and modernise New Zealand's fisheries management system, including proposals to encourage innovation in commercial fishing.

Find out more, attend a public meeting and make a submission until 17 March 2019 at [www.fisheriesnz.haveyoursay.govt.nz](http://www.fisheriesnz.haveyoursay.govt.nz)