



SUSTAINABLE NEW ZEALAND SEAFOOD

New Zealand's Sustainable Fisheries

New Zealand seafood comes from one of the best fisheries management systems in the world.

New Zealand recently became one of only two countries to achieve a top ranking in a review of fisheries management systems around the world¹ and in a second study was ranked first among the 53 major fishing nations for managing marine resources².

How are we managing our fisheries?

The cornerstone of New Zealand's fisheries management regime is the quota management system (QMS), which was introduced in 1986. Under the QMS a yearly catch limit is set for every fish stock. A fish stock is a species of fish, shellfish or seaweed from a particular area of New Zealand waters. By controlling the amount of fish taken from each stock, the

QMS sets the foundation for ensuring the sustainability of New Zealand's fisheries.

New Zealand law requires catch limits for every fish stock to be set at levels that will ensure their long-term sustainability. The Ministry for Primary Industries rigorously monitors the amount of fish caught against these limits and financial penalties are enforced if too much fish is caught in any one year.

Under this system, the commercial catching rights for each of New Zealand's 636 fish stocks have been split into quota shares which can be freely bought and sold. New Zealand is one of only a few countries in the world to use individual transferable quotas on such a broad scale and across so many fisheries.



¹ Boris Worm, Ray Hilborn, et al. 2009. *Rebuilding Global Fisheries*. Science Vol. 325 (5940): 578–585.

² Jacqueline Alder, Sarika Cullis-Suzuki, et al. May 2010. Aggregate performance in managing marine ecosystems of 53 maritime countries. *Marine Policy* Vol. 34 Issue 3: 468–476. Available online at www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/B6VCD-4XMC07C-1/2/fd280d8e991c1526c747cbbf5cd37d34.

Allocating quota to individual fishers encourages them to make sure their catch levels are sustainable because they are guaranteed a permanent share of the fishery in the future. This certainty encourages long term sustainability.

The QMS has delivered significant benefits – most of the stocks that were overfished before the introduction of the QMS now have sustainable catch limits in place. New Zealand is one of the few countries in the world that has an internationally competitive fishing industry that makes use of a natural resource on a sustainable basis.

How can we be confident that our numbers are correct?

New Zealand has sophisticated fisheries research, management, and monitoring systems that work together to make sure future generations of New Zealanders will be able to enjoy and use healthy fisheries.

Each year there is considerable investment in research and fisheries assessment. All research and assessment is carefully reviewed by expert scientists, with active participation by fisheries managers and representatives of environmental and commercial fishing interests. The commercial fishing industry pays for a significant proportion of this research. The results of this research are freely available on the Ministry for Primary Industries website at www.fish.govt.nz.

Although New Zealand is acknowledged as having one of the best fisheries management regimes in the world, there is still much to be done to ensure that our fisheries will continue to benefit current and future generations.

Snapshot of our fisheries

Bottom trawling

More than 90 percent of New Zealand's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) has never been bottom trawled and 30 percent of the EEZ is completely closed to bottom trawling – one of the largest bottom trawl closures

within any EEZ in the world. Check out the information sheet "Protecting New Zealand's Seabed from the Impacts of Bottom Trawling" available at www.fish.govt.nz.

Independent certification

An environmental certification or assessment undertaken by an independent organisation, such as the international Marine Stewardship Council, is one way to demonstrate that a fishery is well managed and sustainable. New Zealand hoki was certified as a sustainably managed fishery by the Marine Stewardship Council in 2001 and was recertified in 2007. The hoki fishery will commence the recertification process in 2011.³

Protecting our marine resources

The Ministry for Primary Industries invests heavily in monitoring fishing activity and in encouraging and enforcing compliance with the law. Fishery Officers patrol New Zealand's coastline to ensure all fishers comply with the rules. Fishing vessels are also monitored at sea using satellite technology, aeroplanes, and patrol boats, to ensure their crew follow the rules. In addition, Ministry Observers are periodically placed on fishing boats to monitor and record what fishers catch, and any interactions with seabirds, marine mammals or protected corals.

Managing environmental effects

Ensuring that impacts on the marine environment caused by fishing activity are kept within acceptable levels is a priority for the Ministry for Primary Industries.

Regulations and industry agreements are in place to reduce the impact of fishing on protected species such as the New Zealand sea lion, fur seals, and seabirds. Restrictions are also in place to protect Hector's and Maui's dolphins, the world's smallest and rarest dolphins.

These measures are all monitored by the Ministry for Primary Industries.



Did you know:

- More than 90 percent of New Zealand's waters have never been bottom trawled, leaving large areas of the marine environment in a largely pristine state.
- Ministry Observers spend over 4,000 days each year on fishing boats around New Zealand waters monitoring and recording what fishers are catching. This information is used in scientific research and to help monitor compliance with the rules and regulations.
- Fishery Officers patrol the coastline from Stewart Island to Cape Reinga and out to the Chatham Islands ensuring that all fishers comply with the fishing rules.

³ For information about the MSC, go to www.msc.org