



Report **03.432**
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Committee **Policy, Finance and Strategy Committee**
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Aquaculture discussion document

1. Purpose

To seek approval from the Committee to proceed with consultation on an aquaculture discussion document.

2. Background

The current moratorium on the granting of coastal permits for aquaculture has been in place since 28 November 2001, and will remain in place until March 2004.

The aquaculture moratorium is the first of the legislative reforms that the government has agreed on to provide for the sustainable development of aquaculture. It was designed to give time for further legislative changes to be made, allowing regional councils to begin developing policies and defining areas for aquaculture without the risk of being swamped with applications that would pre-empt and complicate that process.

While the remainder of the legislation has not yet been introduced to Parliament, we understand that the reforms are likely to include:

- Streamlining the application process for new marine farms by providing a single-permit process. This will require changes to both the Resource Management Act 1991 and the Fisheries Act 1983 so that regional councils can consider all environmental effects, including the use and sustainability of fisheries resources.
- Providing regional councils with greater powers to manage and control the development of aquaculture by requiring marine farming to take place within clearly defined Aquaculture Management Areas (AMAs). These areas will be included in councils' regional coastal plans.
- Allowing regional councils to call for tenders for the right to apply for coastal permits, including tenders for individual marine farm sites within each AMA. Regional councils would retain 50% of the tender money for use in the coastal marine area.

- Retaining the existing requirement that aquaculture should not have an undue adverse effect on customary, recreational and commercial fishing. This requirement will be removed from the Fisheries Act 1983 and instead the Ministry of Fisheries will have to participate in the coastal permit application process by providing regional councils with an assessment of any undue effects that aquaculture development may have on fishing. The legislation will also provide for a negotiation between aquaculture interests and commercial fishing rights holders in circumstances where aquaculture development would have an undue adverse effect on commercial fishing rights.
- A range of transitional provisions to ensure existing marine farm approvals are transferred to the new regime.

Recent discussions with the Ministry for the Environment indicate that they still expect the main reform legislation to be introduced to Parliament in August this year. However, given that the government has yet to make a decision on how to progress with the issue of customary title of the foreshore and seabed, we expect that there will be a further delay.

3. Demand for aquaculture within the Greater Wellington Region

There has been little demand for aquaculture in the Greater Wellington Region. Before 28 November 2001, the Council received three applications for aquaculture, all of which were granted. One of the consents is for a marine farm in Mahanga Bay in Wellington Harbour, and covers an area of 2.9 hectares. The other two consents are in the Wairarapa, one for an area of 0.16 hectares and the other for 4 hectares.

While there has been little demand for aquaculture, a lack of space in other regions and new technology mean that this may increase in the future.

4. The discussion document

The text for an aquaculture discussion document is attached (Attachment One to this report). The discussion document provides some information about the aquaculture moratorium and proposed new legislation. However, the main purpose of the document is to identify whether or not there is any demand for aquaculture within the Greater Wellington Region, and encourage discussion about where aquaculture should and should not be located.

5. Communication

The text will be developed into a booklet, printed and distributed to key stakeholders, including iwi, aquaculture and fishing industry contacts, territorial authorities and the community. Meetings will be held with interested parties.

6. Recommendation

That the Committee recommend that Council approve the aquaculture discussion document to be released for public consultation.

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