



THE UPDATE

Captain's Blog



Fishing and the environment - it shouldn't be an either/or

This week's release of the National Plan of Action on seabirds was the result of three years of discussions between industry, eNGOs, Fisheries New Zealand and the Department of Conservation (DOC).

It is a good result and has the Vision that New Zealand works towards zero fishing-related seabird mortalities.

It won't be easy, but it is a pathway the industry is happy to pursue in partnership with government, because it is that collaboration that will put wind beneath the innovation wings.

Innovation is the key to ensuring the fishing industry is not sacrificed at the altar of good environmental intentions.

And much work is underway.

The underwater bait setter, designed by Leigh fisherman Dave Kellian, has now undergone promising trials on a longliner run by Altair Fishing in Nelson. The line with hooks attached is fed into a capsule which is then hydraulically submerged, and the baited hooks released deep underwater. This avoids seabirds having access to the bait.

It is an impressive operation and was developed to production by Skadia Technologies who supplied [this video](#) of it in operation.

This was a collaboration between industry, Fisheries New Zealand, DOC and the Auckland Zoo Charitable Trust through Southern Seabird Solutions.

The Hookpod is another example. This revolutionary device keeps the hooks from longline vessels shielded in a plastic pod until they are 20 metres underwater and well away from diving birds before it releases the bait. Again, trialling these devices was an industry and government collaboration.

Of course, a simpler solution to saving seabirds would have been to ban fishing – a solution some of fishing opponents would prefer – but simple solutions are almost never the best solutions.

Investment in our economy need not come at the expense of investment in our environment. We would argue that most fishers are already doing their utmost to lessen their footprint on the ocean and the support and encouragement of government agencies is the pathway to do more.

Things are tough out there in this post-COVID world, but instead of using a stick to protect the environment we need to find workable, innovative solutions that will still allow us to supply New Zealand and the world great seafood. If COVID-19 has taught us anything it is the importance of a secure food supply.

The collaboration outlined above is the key to real progress, with the realisation that the choice need not be the environment or commercial fishing – but can be both.

Kiwi seafood companies collaborate to help iwi

Top quality seafood has been slashed in price in an effort to support iwi during COVID-19.

Sealord and Moana New Zealand have been providing their products at discounted prices – up to 70 percent off their retail value – with iwi purchasing the product in large quantities to distribute them to whanau for free.

Iwi Collective Partnership general manager Maru Samuels said the initiative was a collaborative effort.

"Sealord and Moana New Zealand provided the products at discounted prices and iwi picked up those products and distributed them to whānau at no charge," Samuels said.

Sealord contributed more than eight tonnes of battered and crumbed seafood portions to over 30 different iwi.

Their battered hoki fillets typically retail for \$20 per kilogram in supermarkets but were sold to iwi at about \$6.50 per kg. Three tonnes of its crumbed hoki, enough for 21,000 meals, also went into food packages that were distributed to Ngāti Whātua, Ngāpuhi and Ngāti Wai whānau.

Moana New Zealand, entirely iwi-owned, has provided almost 13,000 ready-to-eat meals. The packages are meals for two and retail at about \$7 each but were sold to iwi for about \$3.25.

Moana also assisted iwi with transport, storage and distribution of fish.

"Iwi Māori have only really had their fisheries since the settlement and have had their assets for about 10 years. I've been part of the iwi Māori sector and the wider national fishing industry for around 15 years, and this is the first time I've ever seen something like this happen," Samuels said.

"This is the type of kaupapa and mahi that our people have really hoped to see in terms of what we could use our settlement assets for. It's one thing to generate income, and it's an entirely different level to actually be able to put kai on the table for our whānau."

Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whātua chief executive Alan Riwaka said the partnership meant its most vulnerable were cared for at an extremely distressing time.

"Our primary purpose is to look after our people and distributing food and providing essential health services is an important part of that," he said.

"Within the Tai Tokerau region we have the bulk of New Zealand's Māori population, so it's been important to work together and make sure we're getting the food packs to those who are most vulnerable.

"We're really grateful to our Māori fishing companies for what they've done."

Te Arawa Fisheries chief executive Chris Karamea Insley said the group was proud to step-up and help source fish through its connections such as the Iwi Collective Partnership, Moana New Zealand and Sealord to put fish and meat in the kete for whānau.

"That is part of the purpose of these large organisations - to help give kai to our whānau through these tough times," Insley said.

The initiative is expected to continue for the next two weeks.



Moana New Zealand's Palmerston North factory has been producing ready-to-eat meals for people in need. Image; Moana New Zealand.

Sanford's first-half earnings down in the wake of COVID-19

Sanford Limited has released its interim results for the six months to March 31, reporting a 17 percent drop in first-half profits in the wake of COVID-19.

The company reported a drop in net profits - \$19 million, down from \$22.9m for the same period last year.

Adjusted earnings before interest and tax (EBIT) were \$23.2m for the six months, down 29 per cent, or a 16 percent decrease when excluding the sale of its pelagic business in March 2019.

Total revenue was \$245.5m, down seven percent from \$265m.

While there had been a short interruption to normal operations in March while changes were made to meet Covid-19 safety requirements, Sanford had returned to "relatively normal" operations and supply levels within two weeks.

Sanford chief financial officer, Katherine Turner said the issues the company now face is more on the demand side.

"Consumer behaviour has changed and the food service industry is impacted through restrictions on people's movements and the absence of tourism," Turner said.

"Retail and online sales, although only a small share of our total business, show strong growth, and we are aggressively pursuing further leads in these areas."

Despite the interim result being below expectations, salmon and greenshell mussels continued to hold strong, showing the benefits of diversification, chief executive Volker Kuntzsch said.

"We were pleased that overall sales volumes for our salmon were up two percent versus the same period last year and sales revenue increased six percent," Kuntzsch said.

"Unfortunately, food service channels have been severely impacted by Covid-19 [but] domestic retail sales have been holding up well, and we are hopeful of continuing growth here."

Kuntzsch said it was unlikely the company will be able to make up the first-half earnings shortfall in the second half of the year.

"In the interests of taking a prudent approach, our directors have decided that our interim dividend payment will be five cents per share, versus nine cents for the same period last year."



Sanford chief executive Volker Kuntzsch said the company's salmon and greenshell mussels continued to perform well despite the pandemic's impact. Image; *Stuff*.

News

Kiwis' perspectives of the primary sector have shifted in the wake of COVID-19, *Stuff* reported. Figures from UMR Research show 63 percent of New Zealanders hold a positive view of sheep and beef farming, a nine percent increase compared to eight months ago. Support for dairy farmers has also jumped, rising from 51 percent to 60 percent. Horticulture had the most positive rating of 65 percent, whereas fisheries have shifted into majority positive territory at 53 percent, up from 47 percent. Reasons given for increased positivity included farmers being an essential industry to New Zealand and supporting the economy with jobs and exports. Farmers' willingness to work through the pandemic and their efficient and high-quality food production were also factors. Marc Elliott, director of rural research at UMR said the research appeared to show that, in a time of crisis, New Zealanders were more clearly seeing the critical importance of their food-producing sectors. "When times are good critical aspects of our economy can be taken for granted, however in the current crisis our food producers appear to be receiving the extra credit they deserve."

Environmental group Sea Shepherd have filed a lawsuit against four United States government organisations which rejected a 2019 petition calling on the US to ban the import of New Zealand seafood where Māui dolphins are at risk of becoming bycatch. The lawsuit hinges on part of the United States' Marine Mammal Protection Act and could ban the import of seafood from fisheries that don't have rules preventing bycatch of marine mammals to a similar level to the United States. Seafood New Zealand chief executive Dr Jeremy Helson said a number of measures are already in place to protect the dolphins. "The lawsuit filed by Sea Shepherd is premature and is a tactical move to both accelerate

that process and panic the New Zealand Government to make changes under a pressured situation."

The NZ Rock Lobster Industry Council have welcomed new measures to constrain recreational rock lobster catch and address illegal take in the CRA2 fishery. Effective July 1, the recreational daily bag limit in the CRA2 fishery has reduced from six spiny rock lobsters per person to a new daily limit of three. NZRLIC chief executive Mark Edwards said while the new measures are welcome, the two year delay in their implementation has been frustrating. "A 60 percent catch limit reduction was put in place for the commercial fishery in April 2018. This followed two years where the commercial operators had voluntarily reduced the commercial catch by 50 tonnes in each of two seasons, recognising that reductions in catch were necessary to prevent further depletion of the fishery." The bag limit reductions for recreational fishers have been widely supported by recreational groups, who at the time, acknowledged the need to play their part in rebuilding the stock. Process delays and poor information have resulted in an unacceptable lag in implementing complementary measures for the recreational sector, Edwards said. Even now, there is real doubt about the effectiveness of the measures because there is so much uncertainty about estimates of recreational catch, he said. "This information gap continues to compromise sustainable management of the fishery. However, there are some positive signs for the fishery. Catch rate information, the key index of abundance, suggests a marked improvement in the fishery, with positive trends in all areas of the stock from East Cape to Mangawhai in the north," Edwards said. "Good information is generated not only from statutory reporting from commercial vessels, but also from an extensive program of voluntary logbooks and tag and recapture of lobsters that has been undertaken by the industry at their own cost for more than 20 years." Edwards said the industry also supports the introduction of telson clipping. "The extent of illegal catch is highly uncertain, but telson clipping will help expose poaching and black market activities that impact the stock and deprive the legitimate customary, commercial and recreational sectors of fishing success."

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