

2025

# Year in Review



SEAFOOD  
NEW ZEALAND





**Thank you for picking up our Year in Review for 2025 – our summary of key events, challenges and achievements for both Seafood New Zealand and the industry we represent. In addition to an overview of activity from each of our business groups, this document also contains data and facts from reputable sources which we hope you'll find useful throughout 2026.**

Seafood New Zealand represents Aotearoa New Zealand's commercial fishing sector. Thanks to strong global seafood demand and broad market access, New Zealand's seafood sector earns over \$2 billion in export receipts annually<sup>1</sup> – 4% of the country's total – and is responsible for approximately \$5 billion in economic activity.<sup>2</sup> We are one of New Zealand's top goods exporters.<sup>3</sup>

The numbers in this document relate largely to the New Zealand commercial fishing year, which runs from 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025. Where indicated, some data will be from other time periods, usually the 2025 calendar year.

We hope you refer to this document throughout the year, and invite you to contact us with any questions you may have at [info@seafood.org.nz](mailto:info@seafood.org.nz).

<sup>1</sup> [stats.govt.nz/information-releases/overseas-merchandise-trade-november-2025/](https://stats.govt.nz/information-releases/overseas-merchandise-trade-november-2025/)

<sup>2</sup> [berl.co.nz/our-mahi/economic-and-social-contribution-seafood-new-zealand](https://berl.co.nz/our-mahi/economic-and-social-contribution-seafood-new-zealand)

<sup>3</sup> [stats.govt.nz/information-releases/overseas-merchandise-trade-november-2025/](https://stats.govt.nz/information-releases/overseas-merchandise-trade-november-2025/)



The cod end of the *Resolution II*'s net. The yellow devices are Marport catch sensors; once the top sensor goes off the net is pulled up to ensure the correct amount is caught.

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# Chair's Introduction

**2025 has been a significant year for Seafood New Zealand, and one that has clearly demonstrated the value of our fully amalgamated structure. Bringing Fisheries Inshore New Zealand, the Deepwater Group and, most recently, Southern Inshore Fisheries together under one umbrella has strengthened our ability to advocate for the sector, reduced duplication and made sure we retained the technical expertise and practical focus our members rely on.**

A big focus for us this year was the fisheries reforms. In February 2025, the sector stood alongside the Minister for Oceans and Fisheries as he announced the proposed common-sense changes to the Fisheries Act. These represent the most substantial set of proposed reforms our sector has seen in decades.

I sincerely thank everyone who engaged in the consultation process and made submissions. We saw a record-breaking response from industry. That collective effort has been important in progressing these proposals. We expect the draft Bill to be introduced to the House around March 2026, followed by another round of consultation. Seafood New Zealand will again support and coordinate strong sector engagement throughout that process.

One of the highlights of the year has been our visits to the regions. It has been both a pleasure and a privilege to meet directly with fishers and processors, as well as local MPs, mayors, environmental organisations and other ocean users. These conversations matter. They build understanding, strengthen relationships and the insights we gain help to inform our future work programme.

This is our second Year in Review, and it highlights the breadth of work Seafood New Zealand has undertaken on behalf of its members in 2025. This includes policy and legislative engagement; certification for key stocks; ongoing work to support the management of interactions with protected species; engagement with government, decisionmakers and media; industry

communications; and the science and data that underpin sustainable fisheries management, alongside much more that happens behind the scenes.

2026 will be another big year. Progressing fisheries reform, getting our voices heard through an election year and working to lift public understanding of our industry will require focus and collaboration across the sector.

We hope you find this Year in Review useful. While we aimed to keep it concise, this has meant that many of the activities undertaken by Seafood New Zealand could not be included. Further information is available on our new website, or by getting in touch with the team (contact details are provided at the back of this document).

I thank the Seafood New Zealand Board and Chief Executive Lisa Futschek for their leadership and continued commitment to future-proofing this vital primary industry. I also acknowledge the Seafood New Zealand team for their dedication and hard work throughout the year – this document is a testament to their efforts.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Greg Gent'.

**Greg Gent, ONZM**

*Independent Board Chair,  
Seafood New Zealand*

## Chief Executive's Message

**Welcome to the 2025 Year in Review. This one is special to me, as 2025 marked my first full calendar year as Chief Executive of Seafood New Zealand.**

So, what have I learned over the past year? One of my biggest takeaways is just how integral the fishing sector is to the fabric of regional and rural New Zealand. Ours is an industry that supports many others. On a visit to the West Coast, one fisher told me that for every fisher on the water, there are around 25 people on land whose livelihoods are connected to that activity – from marine engineers and net makers to factory workers and transport operators. That observation has stayed with me.

This year, Greg Gent and I travelled extensively around New Zealand. Wherever we went, we heard firsthand about both the pride people have in their work and their concerns about the increasing noise around commercial fishing, particularly bottom trawling. These conversations reinforced how important it is for us to stay engaged, visible and focused on getting the facts about our sector out there.

Fishing is a primary industry and part of the backbone of this country, supporting jobs, regional economies and food security. Without a strong commercial fishing sector, communities would be greatly impacted – seafood would become more expensive and harder to access, and the country would lose significant export earnings. Kiwis would also become more reliant on imported fish from countries that do not operate under the same robust, science-based fisheries management system that we have here.

Around 75% of New Zealand's commercial catch by volume is taken using bottom trawling, including many of the species New Zealanders know and love, such as tarakihi, trevally, snapper and gurnard. These fisheries are carefully managed under the Quota Management System, and ongoing science and innovation continue to reduce impacts on the

environment. Bottom trawling happens in less than 2% of New Zealand waters each year, while land-based food production uses around 37% of our land area.

We have included a number of these useful “facts to know” in this document, particularly useful as we head into the 2026 election year. We see it as our role to support and invest in science, understand the evidence, and ensure decision-makers and consumers have access to accurate, balanced information. People who enjoy our seafood deserve to feel confident about how it is produced.

I am incredibly proud of the work delivered this year by the Seafood New Zealand team, some of which is outlined in this report. With the recent addition of Nirupa George as our Director of Communications and Engagement, I am confident we are well-placed to navigate the challenges ahead and make real progress in 2026.

Finally, one thing I've emphasised since day one is that my door is open – not just to our industry, but also to those who share the moana with us. Listening and seeking to understand is essential. That message was reinforced by our outstanding 2025 conference keynote speaker, Harold Hillman, and it is something Seafood New Zealand will continue to prioritise in the year ahead.



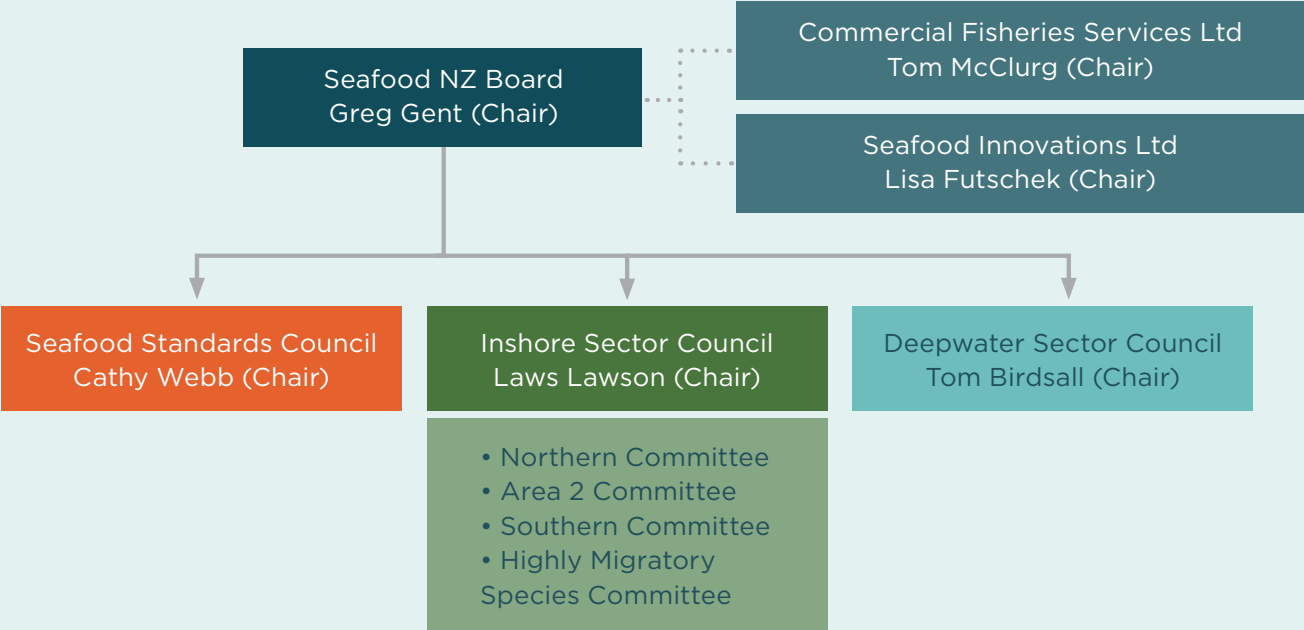
A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa Futschek". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

**Lisa Futschek**

*Chief Executive,  
Seafood New Zealand*

# Seafood New Zealand Governance

## Seafood New Zealand Governance Chart – January 2026



# Seafood New Zealand Board

As at 31 December 2025



**Greg Gent**  
(Chair)



**Annabel Scaife**



**Laws Lawson**



**Tom Searle**



**Maru Samuels**



**Geoff Burgess**



**Steve Tarrant**



**Tony Hazlett**

## Business Ops GM's Introduction

**The focus for 2025 was bedding down and implementing new systems and processes to support the fully amalgamated organisation. Reducing the administrative burden on our management remained a key focus to ensure that the team could focus on their significant work programmes.**

A new financial management system was implemented in December 2024. This has provided the leadership team with more visibility and more timely month-end reporting. A full budget reforecast was completed at the six-month mark. This resulted in a reduced call for funding in part of the financial year.

New HR and payroll systems were implemented in the second half of the year. This provided the company with more cost-effective solutions for our relatively simple needs.

Moving all files across to a central SharePoint system has also led to better access to information across the team and across geographic locations.

Work will continue in 2026 on finding ways to make business operations more efficient and cost-effective, including working with AI to help us tap into the huge amount of information we need to access regularly to tell our seafood story.



The Seafood New Zealand team.



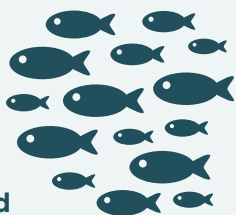
**Karen Olver**

*GM, Business Operations  
and Service Delivery*

## Business Ops by the Numbers

15

Seafood  
New Zealand  
staff members



\$107,500

in sponsorships  
to support the  
industry



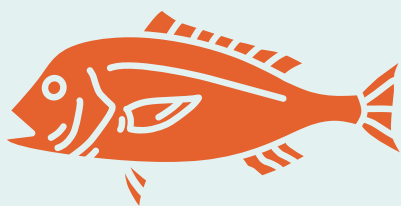
34

Board, Council,  
Committee and  
Quota owner meetings



# 2025 in Numbers

All data quoted is for the 2024/25 fishing year, from 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025, unless otherwise stated.



**350,471 tonnes**

of fish caught across inshore and deepwater commercial fisheries<sup>4</sup>



**\$1.6b**

in export revenue from wild capture fisheries<sup>5</sup>



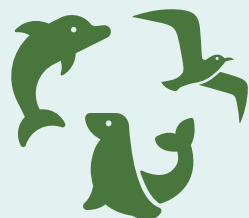
**300**  
submissions

on the Fisheries Act Amendments made with Seafood New Zealand's online form

Between July 2024–June 2025 cameras recorded over

**37,000**

fishing events



In 2024/25,

**4%**

of commercial fishing events involved an interaction with a protected species<sup>6</sup>

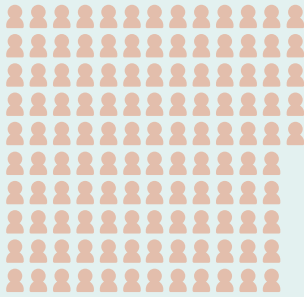
<sup>4</sup> Fishserve

<sup>5</sup> MPI, SOPI report 2025, data is for the year to 30 June 2025 in \$NZD

<sup>6</sup> Fishserve data based on 135,087 fishing events (excludes diving and handgathering) and 5,343 non-fish or protected species reports

# SNZ in Numbers

All data quoted is for the 2024/25 fishing year, from 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025, unless otherwise stated.



**125**  
members  
who own  
fisheries quota



**29**  
submissions made  
to local and national  
government



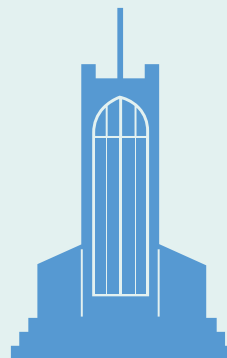
**2** full-time staff  
dedicated to  
working with fishers  
to reduce protected  
species interactions



**6**  
*Beers and Ideas*  
fisher meetups  
held in regions  
across Aotearoa  
New Zealand



**12,000**  
students reached at Careers Expos  
and 650 career advisors and  
educators at the CATE Conference



**290**  
delegates joined us  
in Nelson for our  
2025 conference

# New Zealand Seafood Trade

The following is a snapshot of our trade for the year 1 October 2024 – 30 September 2025.

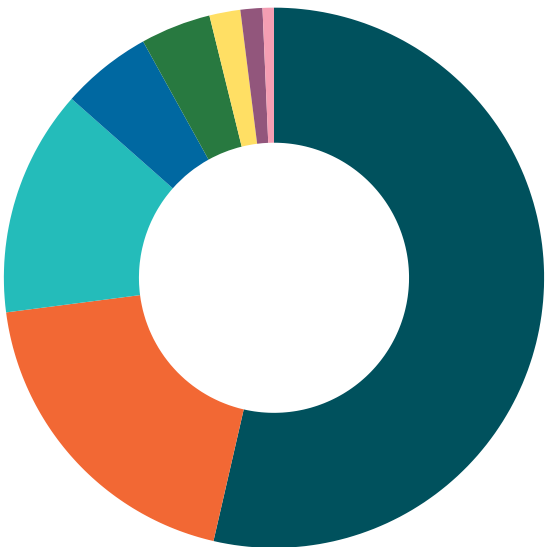
Seafood exports for the period generated **NZ \$2,211 million in revenue** from the export of **239,932 tonnes of seafood**. Finfish accounted for 77% of the volume of exports (comparable to 78% the previous period) and 53.5% of total export value, about a 5% increase from the previous period.

China, the United States and Australia remain in the top three positions this period as our key export partners, with Poland increasing by 23%, bringing it into fourth place. Exports to South Africa also increased to NZ \$39 million up from NZ \$21 million the previous period. Denmark makes it into our top ten markets this period, importing a range of New Zealand seafood species, as we continue to maintain a diverse market and species mix, exporting around 100 commercial species to over 100 countries.

Furthermore, reductions in tariffs arising from recent Free Trade Agreements – such as with the European Union (the NZ-EU FTA came into force on 1 May 2024, during the middle of the previous reporting period) and the United Arab Emirates (the NZ-UAE CEPA), along with the wider Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) FTA (concluded but still to be ratified) – continue to provide new and exciting export opportunities for the seafood sector.

All data for this section has been sourced by Seafood New Zealand from Stats NZ.

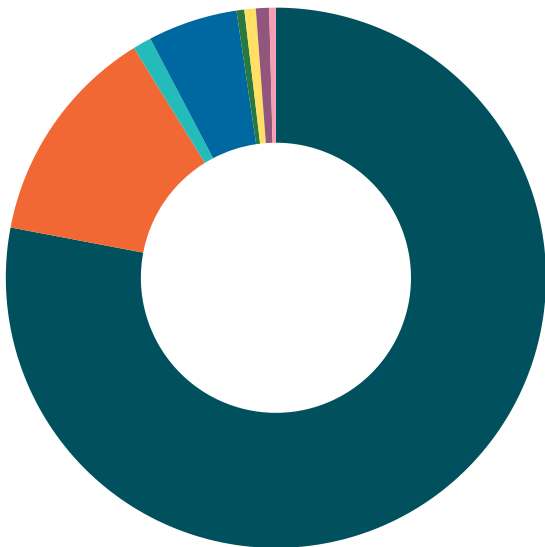
Total Value (\$M)



|                       |       |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Finfish .....         | 1,185 |
| Mussels .....         | 428   |
| Rock Lobster .....    | 300   |
| Squid .....           | 120   |
| Other Crustacea ..... | 93    |
| Other Molluscs .....  | 41    |
| Other .....           | 29    |
| Oysters .....         | 15    |

**Total (\$M) 2,211**

Total Volume (tonnes)



|                       |         |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Finfish .....         | 187,103 |
| Mussels .....         | 31,696  |
| Rock Lobster .....    | 2,667   |
| Squid .....           | 12,861  |
| Other Crustacea ..... | 1,117   |
| Other Molluscs .....  | 1,635   |
| Other .....           | 1,897   |
| Oysters .....         | 956     |

**Total (tonnes) 239,932**

# OVERVIEW | 2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

The following tables compare exports for year end 30 September 2024 and 30 September 2025.

## Top 10 Export Countries by Value (\$FOB)

| Country                  | 2025  | 2024  | % Change |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|----------|
| China                    | \$614 | \$722 | ▼ -15    |
| United States of America | \$397 | \$397 | — 0      |
| Australia                | \$257 | \$247 | ▲ 4      |
| Poland                   | \$101 | \$82  | ▲ 23     |
| Japan                    | \$92  | \$95  | ▼ -3     |
| Spain                    | \$83  | \$73  | ▲ 14     |
| South Africa             | \$39  | \$21  | ▲ 86     |
| Denmark                  | \$36  | \$23  | ▲ 57     |
| Cameroon                 | \$35  | \$35  | — 0      |
| Greece                   | \$35  | \$35  | — 0      |

## Top 10 Export Species by Value (NZ\$)

| Species                                                                                           | 2025  | 2024  | % Change |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|----------|
|  Mussels       | \$428 | \$379 | ▲ 13     |
|  Rock Lobster  | \$300 | \$361 | ▼ -17    |
|  Hoki          | \$267 | \$252 | ▲ 6      |
|  Salmon        | \$214 | \$190 | ▲ 13     |
|  Squid         | \$120 | \$127 | ▼ -6     |
|  Jack Mackerel | \$106 | \$94  | ▲ 13     |
|  Ling          | \$88  | \$72  | ▲ 22     |
|  Barracouta    | \$46  | \$23  | ▲ 100    |
|  Orange Roughy | \$43  | \$54  | ▼ -20    |
|  Snapper       | \$40  | \$37  | ▲ 8      |



# Proposed Amendments to the Fisheries Act

From Seafood New Zealand Chief Executive, Lisa Futschek

**In February 2025, fisheries policy took an important and welcome step forward. Minister for Oceans and Fisheries Shane Jones launched the consultation on proposed amendments to the Fisheries Act – regarded as the most significant proposals in decades, and the broadest set of changes since the Quota Management System (QMS) was introduced.**

These proposals did not emerge in isolation. They were informed by the Seafood Industry Forum established by the Minister in early 2024, recognising the complexity of the regulatory environment our sector operates within. The Fisheries Act alone spans 370 sections, and compliance carries both time and cost implications for fishers and businesses. The Forum created a valuable space for robust, practical discussion between industry and the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), with a shared focus on improvements that support both economic growth and sustainable fisheries.

The proposed amendments reflect that collaborative work. They focus on practical changes designed to make the system more efficient, certain and responsive. They include improvements to decision-making processes, such as options for multi-year catch settings and clearer recognition of socio-economic considerations. They demonstrate the value of onboard cameras as a modern verification tool, alongside enhanced protections for fisher privacy.

And they introduce sensible updates to landings and discards settings, including options to return QMS species to sea when fishing is monitored and catch is accounted for with Annual Catch Entitlement (ACE).

Combined, these changes represent a positive evolution of New Zealand's fisheries management framework. Better use of data, more flexible regulatory tools and greater operational clarity all contribute to stronger long-term outcomes. Sustainability remains the foundation of the system, while regulatory oversight and public participation continue as essential pillars.

The consultation process saw strong engagement across the sector. Seafood New Zealand welcomed the opportunity to contribute constructively and wishes to acknowledge the Minister and MPI officials for their openness throughout this process.

Following consultation, the Minister confirmed the reforms would progress. Drafting of a Fisheries Amendment Bill is now complete, with introduction to Parliament expected in the first half of 2026.

These common-sense changes have the potential to deliver meaningful, long-term benefits for our sector – strengthening sustainability outcomes, improving certainty and supporting our coastal communities. They will also move New Zealand closer to world-best practice in responsive, data-informed fisheries management.

I encourage everyone across our seafood whānau to stay engaged and have your say when the Bill moves through the Select Committee process in 2026.

# Bottom Trawling in New Zealand

**Bottom trawling is New Zealand's most common commercial fishing method. Fishers target popular species such as hoki, tarakihi, orange roughy and snapper on or near the bottom of the seafloor because that is where these fish live.**

Although the method has been used for centuries, it continues to evolve, with modern New Zealand fishers employing lightweight, more selective gear and larger mesh sizes that allow smaller fish to escape.

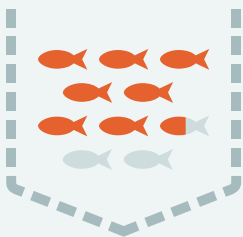
Because trawl gear is damaged if operated over rough seabed, fishing activity is naturally concentrated on sandy or muddy areas.



Watch this video to see what inshore bottom trawling looks like in New Zealand today



**Public discussion of bottom trawling can sometimes overlook the realities of how this method is carried out in New Zealand. Here are some useful facts on bottom trawling in New Zealand:**



**Around 75%** of New Zealand's commercial catch by volume is taken using bottom trawling<sup>1</sup>

Analysis by the Ministry for Primary Industries shows the area of seabed contacted annually by trawl gear has **steadily decreased** since 2008<sup>3</sup>

Bottom trawling occurs in around **2%** of New Zealand's waters each year<sup>2</sup>

**Around 31% of New Zealand's waters are closed to bottom trawling - an area more than four times the size** of New Zealand's landmass<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Based on catch data provided by Fisheries New Zealand

<sup>2</sup> <https://fs.fish.govt.nz/Doc/25805/AEBR-344-2024-Extent-and-intensity-of-bottom-contact-by-commercial-trawling-in-New-Zealand-waters-1990-2022.pdf.ashx>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/fishing-aquaculture/sustainable-fisheries/strengthening-fisheries-management/bottom-trawling>

<sup>4</sup> <https://fs.fish.govt.nz/Doc/25805/AEBR-344-2024-Extent-and-intensity-of-bottom-contact-by-commercial-trawling-in-New-Zealand-waters-1990-2022.pdf.ashx>

## Inshore GM's Introduction

**2025 has been a defining year for the inshore sector – marked by structural reform, heightened scrutiny and measurable progress.**

The completion of the onboard camera rollout is a significant milestone for transparency and accountability. For the first time, we have a verified, system-wide baseline that industry and the regulator can rely on with confidence. Together with proposed amendments to the Fisheries Act 1996, this will enable faster, more effective, evidence-based management decisions. We are operating with more information and assurance than ever before.

Our science and management work strengthened that platform. The first trawl survey in Area 2 since the 1990s, delivered with local fishers and independent scientists, materially improved understanding of key stocks. Proactive elephantfish assessments and ACE shelving demonstrated responsible stewardship in action. Engagement with Wellington spearfishers ensured continued access to important fishing grounds – proof that practical solutions are achievable when parties work in good faith.

At the same time, the scale of consultation, reform and litigation affecting the sector has been unprecedented. We engaged on operational settings such as cost recovery and Pacific bluefin tuna sustainability measures, while contributing to significant legislative reform including amendments to the Fisheries Act, the Resource Management Amendment Bill and changes to national direction under the RMA. These reforms will shape the regulatory framework for years to come – and we have been clear, consistent and evidence-driven in our contributions.

Judicial review proceedings concerning cost recovery, the Fisheries New Zealand observer programme, Hector's and Māui dolphin management settings, and emergency closures for hoiho further highlight the importance of sound statutory interpretation and science-based decision-making. While formally directed at government, the implications for commercial fishing are significant. Our participation ensures the perspective of responsible, compliant operators are represented where it matters most.

Internally, we farewelled Rosa Edwards and welcomed Dave Goad as Inshore Fisheries Manager – Protected Species. We were also proud to see Principal Policy Manager Inshore Tamar Wells recognised with the Future Leader Award at the 2025 New Zealand Seafood Sustainability and Innovation Awards – reflecting the calibre of leadership within our sector.

The operating environment remains complex and highly visible. However, the inshore sector enters the future better informed, better equipped and confident in the strength of our management systems. With robust data, professional fishers and a steadfast commitment to evidence, we are not simply responding to change – we are helping shape the future of sustainable fisheries in New Zealand.

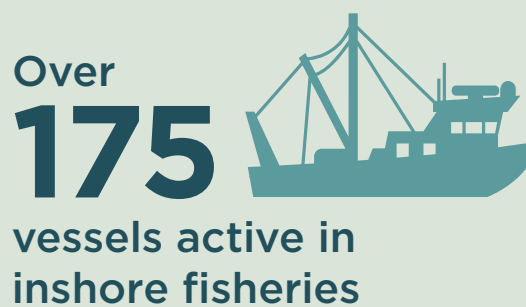


**Tiffany Bock**

*GM, Inshore*

## Inshore by the Numbers

October 2024 – September 2025

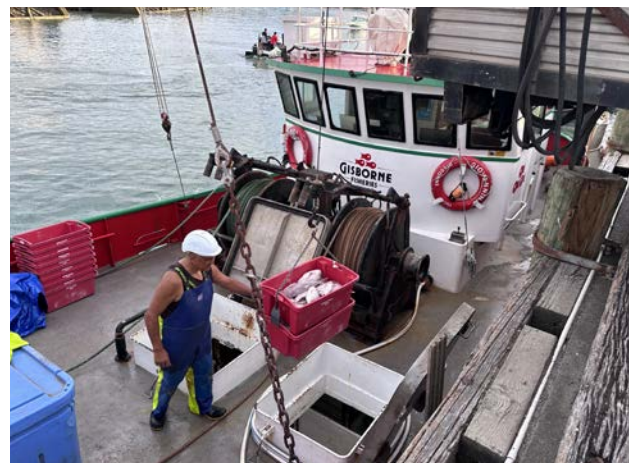


## Area 2 Trawl Survey Delivery

**This year marked the delivery of the first inshore random area trawl survey in Area 2 (off Gisborne and Napier) since 1999, and the first inshore trawl survey delivered by industry in recent memory.**

The survey aims to provide a monitoring tool for key species in the area (e.g. snapper, tarakihi and trevally). Funded by the industry with a welcome contribution from the Ministry for Primary Industries, the pilot survey involved three vessels – one from Gisborne Fisheries Limited and two of Moana New Zealand's contract fishers. NIWA (now Earth Sciences New Zealand) advised and managed the operations alongside the independent scientist who designed the survey.

The fishers carried out around 20 tows each at specifically assigned locations over the duration of the survey. All the main species of fish from those survey tows were counted, measured and sampled to assess attributes of the populations. Results indicated snapper were present in about five times



greater numbers than 1996. Trevally numbers also appeared to have increased. We need to complete the trawl survey over a few consecutive years to build up the monitoring index, but we hope in future the outputs of the survey will be used by Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ) to inform decision making. The increased certainty on biomass allows us to be more agile in our fisheries management.

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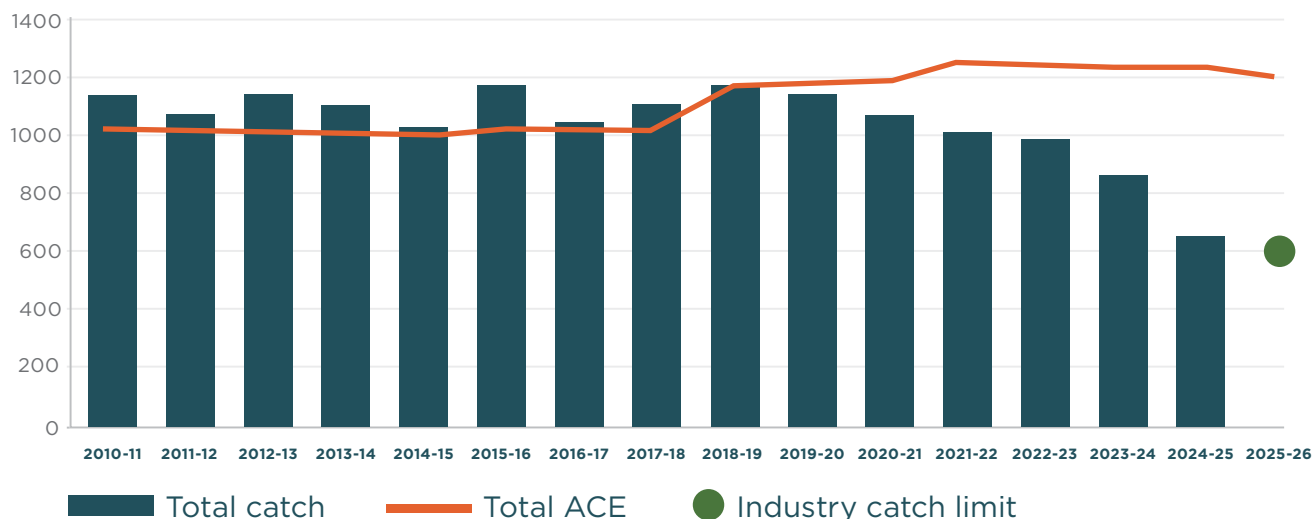
## Proactive Management – East Coast South Island Elephantfish

**In 2025, quota owners and fishers were presented with an industry-funded assessment for elephantfish in fisheries management area 3 (ELE 3) on the East Coast of the South Island. The presentation was peer-reviewed by the Fisheries New Zealand science working group and indicated that the stock status is not at the level we would like it to be.**

Because of the substantial reduction in the flatfish target fishery on the East Coast, there has been a shift of effort to targeting ELE 3, especially in the southern region and in shallower depths. Despite the increased target fishery, the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) has not been taken since 2019/20.



## ELE 3



ELE 3 quota holders agreed to use Annual Catch Entitlement (ACE) shelving to reduce the availability of ACE on the market for the 2025/26 fishing year. We were very encouraged that 88.3% of ELE 3 ACE was shelved for 2025/26. This action will reduce the potential catch from 1,150 tonnes to 600 tonnes and support increasing abundance of the stock in future.

A further update to the ELE 3 assessment will be done in early 2026 which will help to inform future management actions.

## Camera Rollout Completion

**Midway through the 2024-25 year, the Ministry for Primary Industries' (MPI) on-board camera programme rollout was completed. We now have around 220 cameras onboard inshore fishing vessels that record all fishing activity.**

Between July 2024 and June 2025, these cameras recorded over 37,000 fishing events. Around 27% of the footage has been reviewed by our regulator, MPI, with reviewers focusing on trips involving protected species interactions, high-risk areas and a mix of random checks to keep an eye on activities across the board.

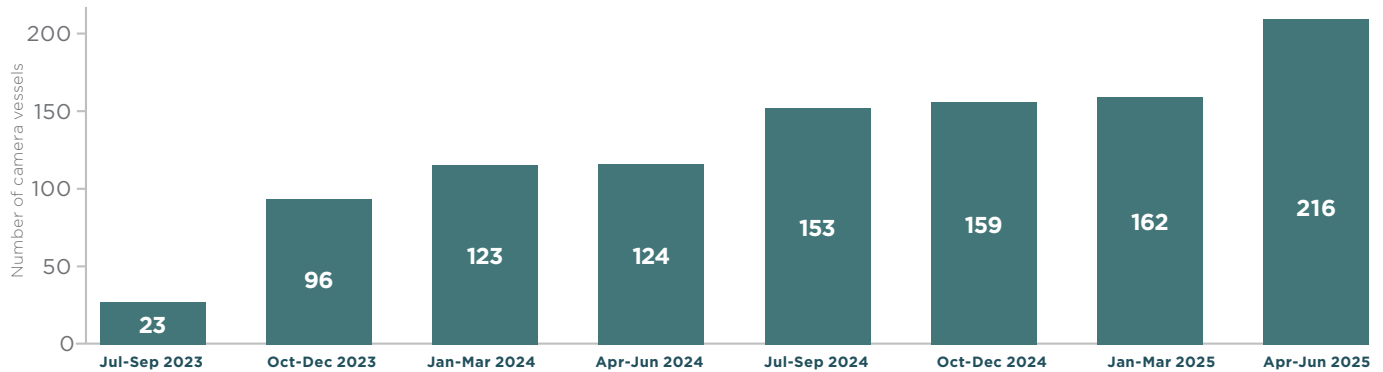
As expected, cameras have sharpened reporting around catch and bycatch. At times, some of these numbers have been used to villainise the industry, often presented without explanation or context. The footage confirms what we know from working alongside fishers: that the vast majority are doing the right thing. Numbers are within what was expected and sustainable, and now we have the verification to show that.



# INSHORE COUNCIL | 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

## On-board Camera Programme Rollout

July 2023 – June 2025



### 1 Aug 2023

Trawl vessels\* less or equal to 32 metres and set net vessels greater than or equal to 8 metres fishing the West Coast North Island.



### 31 Oct 2023

Set net vessels greater than or equal to 8 metres and trawl vessels\* less than or equal to 32 metres fishing off the north, east, and south coasts of the South Island.



### 16 Jan 2024

All surface longline vessels.



### 26 Jun 2024

Bottom longline vessels in FMA 1.



### 3 Mar 2025

All remaining bottom longline vessels and all remaining trawl vessels\* less than or equal to 32 metres.



### 28 May 2025

All remaining set net vessels 8 metres or longer, all purse seine vessels and all Danish seine vessels.

Number of camera vessels



Key dates

\* Except those targeting scampi.

What cameras provide – and what we have never had before – is verified data across nearly the whole inshore fleet. The early feedback from MPI has been encouraging. We now have a reliable baseline that is helping us identify where more research could make a difference, where extra support for fishers is needed and where management approaches can be refined for better outcomes.

We are also working with industry and Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ) to explore how our fisheries management can be improved on the back of this verified data.

This is part of the supporting rationale for the proposed amendments to the Fisheries Act in relation to landings & discards settings and also using the data to respond much more quickly (e.g. decision rules). There is also huge potential in applications of AI, whether that is in identifying and quantifying protected species, enabling fish species ID and measurements, and even providing information on mitigation use and effectiveness.



## Changes in the Hauraki Gulf

**There are over a million people who view the Hauraki Gulf / Tīkapa Moana as their backyard and food basket. It's a natural consequence that interest in the Gulf is high, and it tends to be the launching point for many campaigns and initiatives in the marine space.**

Many things affect the health/mauri of the Gulf. Runoff from urbanisation, sedimentation from land development and land use changes, tourism operations, recreational activities and fish catch (by all sectors) all affect the Gulf in different and often intersecting ways. Coupled with climate change, invasive species (e.g. exotic caulerpa), and some very abundant fish stocks, the Gulf is an environment that needs monitoring, attention and appropriate, holistic management based on science and evidence.

Commercial fishing is often portrayed as the villain, or the cause of all woes in the Gulf. This type of pressure has led to the implementation of the Hauraki Gulf/Tīkapa Moana Marine Protection Act, which came into force on 25 October 2025. This Act created or extended 19 protected areas in the Gulf, increasing the protected seafloor in the Gulf from 27% to 37%. In light of additional data on small-scale fishing, and to ensure continued supply of healthy,

affordable protein to local Auckland communities and marae, the Act preserves limited access for five low-impact ring net fishers in two of the 12 HPAs (Kawau Bay and Rangitoto & Motutapu) as a just transition for them.

We also saw the Minister for Oceans and Fisheries announce that he would not be progressing the bottom fishing access zones consulted on in 2023. While this was welcome news for the industry, as the proposals would have resulted in a significant loss of income and fish supply, it prompted campaigners to advocate for the Waikato Regional Council (WRC) to introduce controls on fishing through its Regional Coastal Plan. The Council subsequently incorporated these provisions into the Plan. We appealed the Plan in November 2025, as we consider the Council has strayed well beyond its jurisdiction by making fisheries management decisions that properly fall under the Fisheries Act rather than the Resource Management Act (RMA).



The Resolution II fishing for hoki.

## Deepwater GM's Introduction

**The 2024/25 fishing year was one of the most varied, demanding and fast-moving periods the deepwater team has experienced, combining major gains with significant challenges. Across certification, science, environmental performance and policy, the deepwater sector operated at full stretch while still delivering results that underscore the resilience and capability of New Zealand's deepwater fisheries.**

One of the year's standout achievements was navigating the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) transition to the new Fisheries Certification Standard. After two years of sustained engagement with the MSC and the Association of Sustainable Fisheries, we secured a pathway enabling hoki, hake, ling and southern blue whiting to begin reassessment under version 3.0 of the MSC standard – an accomplishment achieved by only a handful of fisheries worldwide. In parallel, New Zealand played a formative role in launching the Certified Seafood International standard, contributing to its Steering and Technical Committees and later its Board (with our chair, Tom Birdsall, being appointed as an associate director), helping shape a high-quality, practical and credible alternative for global seafood sustainability certification.

Science delivery remained a defining strength. The Cook Strait and East Coast South Island hoki acoustic survey aboard the *FV Rakaia* produced high-quality biomass information that will update long-running abundance indices.

The rollout of electronic deck-based logging tools across parts of the fleet further modernised data collection, improving timeliness and supporting more responsive assessments, along with the deepwater info-portal being rolled out across the fleet, which will enable the delivery of data and information to and from the fleet.

But the year also brought some real tests. Delays in the production of the SMARTCam due to a fault in design meant it could not be deployed in time to provide much-needed visual information for our bottom trawl fisheries. The Chatham Rise orange roughy programme continued to face scientific pressures, which resulted in significant precautionary catch reductions, while the Environmental Law Initiative judicial review of the 2023-24 ORH 3B TACC decision highlighted increasing scrutiny of how sustainability and precaution are applied in bottom trawl fisheries. Despite these pressures, our deepwater sector continues to adapt, problem-solve, and uphold strong environmental and operational standards.

What stands out from this year is the ability of our 'deepwater' people to keep moving forward; to innovate, to adapt and to remain globally visible.



A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, fluid 'A' followed by a series of loops and a final flourish.

**Aaron Irving**

*GM, Deepwater*

## Deepwater by the Numbers



Around

**50%**

of the quota in the deepwater fisheries represented by the Deepwater Council is in Māori ownership



**78**

vessels operate in the deepwater fishery\*



**59%**

of the 2024/25 deepwater catch is from fisheries certified by MSC as ecologically sustainable

*\*Some of these vessels also operate in inshore fisheries.*

## Third-party certification

### Marine Stewardship Council

**Around 59% of the catch from the New Zealand deepwater fisheries is certified sustainable against the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) standards. The recent reassessment against the new MSC version 3.0 for hoki, hake, ling and southern blue whiting has been a significant milestone, making them the first in the world to be certified under this updated standard.**

This recertification is a significant milestone for New Zealand's deepwater fisheries. Achieving MSC certification for our hoki, hake, ling and southern blue whiting fisheries is an independent verification of the strength and integrity of our fisheries management system here in New Zealand. It reflects three years of planning, preparation, engagement with MSC on a number of issues and detailed evidence-gathering under the more challenging MSC v3.0 standard, which sets a very high bar for fisheries sustainability.

This certification helps to assure consumers around the world that our fisheries operate to the very highest standards.



## Certified Seafood International

**This year, we have also been one of the drivers in the creation and implementation of a newly developed standard for seafood certification called Certified Seafood International (CSI). New Zealand has long been a world leader in sustainable fisheries, so it made sense for Seafood New Zealand to play an active role in the creation of CSI, which sets the bar for how fisheries operate, balancing environmental protection with industry needs.**



Seafood New Zealand is helping to test this new standard, starting with some of New Zealand's most important fisheries: hoki, hake, ling and southern blue whiting. These fisheries are not only economically valuable but also complex, covering trawl and longline methods across different regions. By assessing them under CSI's new framework, Seafood New Zealand is helping to ensure the standard is both practical and effective.

Because this is a brand-new standard, it has to be tested against real-world fisheries to ensure it is fit-for-purpose. It involves careful review of management systems, fisheries data and environmental outcomes, ensuring that practices protect vulnerable species and sensitive habitats while supporting healthy fish stocks. Funding from the Association of Sustainable Fisheries has helped make this testing possible, allowing these fisheries to be part of shaping a global standard.

**"We are excited about the launch of the novel CSI Fisheries Standard, which is a high-quality standard. We are already hard at work progressing the assessment of some of our fisheries against this new standard. Ultimately, we want our fisheries to be the first in the world to be certified sustainable by CSI - not unlike what we did with MSC back in 2001."**

**- Aaron Irving, General Manager Deepwater**

## Hoki Survey 2024-25

**In winter 2025, the *FV Rakaia* departed Nelson to conduct an important acoustic biomass survey of hoki, New Zealand's largest commercial fishery.**

The survey was initiated by Seafood New Zealand, led by Earth Sciences New Zealand (formerly NIWA) and undertaken by RMD Marine Ltd aboard the *FV Rakaia*. It covered key spawning areas including the Cook Strait, Pegasus Canyon and Conway Trough along the east coast of the South Island, continuing a monitoring programme that has operated for more than three decades.

Hoki is New Zealand's largest finfish fishery, with an annual Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) of 110,000 tonnes. During winter spawning, hoki gather in dense midwater schools, making it possible to estimate their abundance using acoustic technology. These annual surveys are a critical part of the scientific information used in stock assessments that guide sustainable catch limits and long-term fisheries management decisions.





Seafood New Zealand facilitating a live cross to the *Rakaia* during a survey.

## The survey used a combination of acoustic and trawl sampling tools:

- The ES70 echosounder (38kHz) on the *Rakaia* was calibrated in Tasman Bay to ensure precise readings of fish density.
- Acoustic snapshots were taken at six locations in the Cook Strait and eight in the East Coast of the South Island to coincide with peak spawning activity.
- Mark identification trawls were then conducted to verify the acoustic snapshots were capturing hoki (as opposed to other species). Biological samples (including otoliths and length measurements) were then collected so we can understand the ages of the different fishes in the stock sample.
- Temperature and depth loggers on the nets allowed accurate calculation of sound absorption and speed, improving biomass estimates.

Weather conditions, particularly in Cook Strait, created operational challenges, but careful planning allowed the team to complete the survey within available calm-weather windows. The survey design focused on collecting high-quality acoustic data rather than extensive trawling, ensuring consistency with the long-term monitoring programme.

Initial results showed dense spawning aggregations in Cook Strait and Pegasus Canyon, consistent with historical patterns. Hoki dominated the catches, with only small amounts of other species recorded. The information gathered will update long-running abundance indices for the eastern hoki stock, helping scientists track trends over time.

Overall, the 2025 survey confirms that key eastern spawning areas remain productive. The updated data will feed directly into stock assessments used to set catch limits, supporting ongoing sustainable management and reinforcing New Zealand's reputation for science-based fisheries management.

## Improving Fisheries Management Through Electronic Logging Trials

**Effective fisheries management depends on accurate measurement of fish populations. Under New Zealand's Quota Management System (QMS), biomass assessments are a key component in determining Annual Catch Entitlements. With 642 fish stocks managed within the QMS, ensuring sufficient biological data is available to support robust stock assessments remains an ongoing priority.**

Fishing vessels play an important role in collecting this information. Biological sampling – including data on fish length, age and sex – contributes to the modelling used to estimate stock abundance. While government observers continue to provide valuable data, observer coverage is often prioritised toward protected species monitoring and compliance activities, which can limit the amount of biological sampling undertaken for some fisheries.

To complement existing monitoring programmes, Seafood New Zealand's Deepwater team has initiated a trial of electronic deck loggers, developed by Nelson-based technology company ZebraTech and informed by similar systems used in the rock lobster fishery. These devices enable vessel crews to record fish length-frequency data digitally at sea, replacing previous paper-based tally systems that were resource-intensive and time-consuming to process. Once vessels return to coverage, recorded data can be transmitted

directly to a central database for validation, storage and analysis, improving both the efficiency and timeliness of data availability.

The trial is currently operating on a small number of hoki vessels, with encouraging early results. Within the first several months, crews across three vessels have collectively measured more than 38,000 fish, demonstrating both the practicality of the system and strong crew engagement. The next phase will focus on expanding deployment across the hoki fleet and strengthening supporting data systems to ensure the information collected meets the standards required for incorporation into formal stock assessments.



Electronic deck logger by ZebraTech.



Fishing for hoki.

## Protected Species

**Seafood New Zealand plays an active and constructive role in the protected species space, working alongside fishers, Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ), the Department of Conservation (DOC), scientists and environmental stakeholders to reduce interactions and improve outcomes for Aotearoa's marine wildlife. While statutory management responsibility sits with government agencies, Seafood New Zealand focuses on practical, on-water solutions – supporting fishers to continually improve performance and demonstrate stewardship in action.**

This commitment is backed by two full-time staff focused on protected species work. Their roles centre on assisting fishers with mitigation, supporting operational improvements, strengthening collaboration across the sector, and ensuring lessons are shared quickly and effectively.

At the heart of this work is the industry's culture of care and responsibility. Fishers operate in the marine environment every day and have a direct interest in its long-term health.

Regulations are necessarily generalised across diverse fisheries, gear types and regions, yet fishing takes place in highly dynamic environments. As a result, much of the most effective mitigation occurs in the voluntary space, where fishers go above and beyond regulatory requirements to minimise overlap, reduce risk and adapt to emerging information.

Seafood New Zealand supports this approach through operational procedures, codes of practice and voluntary agreements. When capture events occur, the focus is on constructive response – making sure information is shared across fleets, identifying practical improvements and applying lessons learned. Continuous improvement is the goal. That includes learning from international best practice, contributing New Zealand experience overseas, testing new ideas and supporting innovation on vessels. It also means ensuring science is targeted where it can have the greatest impact – improving risk estimates, filling key data gaps and directing effort to where it will most effectively reduce interactions.

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## Monitoring and Transparency

### **Improved monitoring has transformed the protected species space.**

Deepwater fisheries have had high levels of observer coverage for years, with 50-60% coverage across the fisheries in recent years.

More recently, onboard cameras have been rolled out on all trawlers, set netters, longliners and seine vessels between 8 and 32 metres in length, which

has significantly improved reporting and reduced uncertainty (read more on page 19). Initial indications are that species identification from cameras is pretty good, and information is captured about the circumstances of captures. This enables targeted and informed action to be taken quickly.

Over time, the growing dataset will further refine risk assessments and mitigation strategies. Transparency is critical – it builds trust and creates opportunities to learn and improve.

## Seabirds

### Reducing impacts on seabirds remains a key focus.

Albatross interactions continue to receive close attention. In deepwater trawl fisheries, improved fish waste management has substantially reduced warp captures over time, with observed seabird capture rates declining by more than 50% between 2012 and 2024.

However, 2025 saw a spike in albatross captures. In response, Seafood New Zealand met with operators, crew and companies to better understand the issue and identify practical solutions. Feedback reinforced the importance of diligent fish waste management to reduce attraction and additional seasonal mitigation measures. Seafood New Zealand will continue

working closely with the fleet to reinforce best practice.

Similarly, we have seen increases in captures in northern areas, and have worked persistently to provide educational materials and offer support to operators to ensure they have the right equipment and understand steps they can take to reduce risk.

A collaborative project is underway between Seafood New Zealand and DOC to install temporary stern cameras on selected deepwater vessels to better understand seabird behaviour around nets and warps. These trials aim to provide more detailed insights into interaction pathways and inform future mitigation refinements.

## Marine Mammals

### New Zealand fur seals are the most frequently caught marine mammal in New Zealand fisheries. Although classified nationally as Not Threatened and internationally as Least Concern with populations increasing, they remain a priority species due to relatively high interaction rates.

During the 2024/25 hoki season, more than 200 fur seals were reported caught across deepwater and coastal trawl fleets. Over half of these occurred in Cook Strait and Pegasus Canyon, with an unexpected increase on the West Coast of the South Island.

Mitigation in this space is complex. Net binding trials conducted in 2023 showed promise and have since been incorporated into the 2025 Coastal Hoki Operational Procedure as a recommended measure during shooting of the net. A global technology review has identified emerging tools such as targeted acoustic startle technology (TAST), hydrostatic-triggered net constriction and seal exclusion devices, though these remain in early stages. A TAST trial is scheduled for 2026, focused

on reducing seal interactions during hoki spawning fisheries.

DOC's Conservation Services Programme will undertake a nationwide population update in 2025/26 to refresh abundance estimates at key breeding sites and update the national population figure.

Following numerous regional meetings and some Seafood New Zealand research last year, vessels fishing in Hector's and Māui dolphin habitat are using acoustic devices to deter animals from fishing gear. There were fewer dolphin interactions this year, and we remain optimistic that we can continue this trend.

Across all fisheries, the direction of travel is clear: better information, fit-for-purpose mitigation and a strong culture of stewardship. Seafood New Zealand's role is to support fishers to minimise interactions, share lessons quickly and foster innovation. Protected species work is not static – it evolves as science, technology and operational experience develop. The sector's focus remains on doing the best job possible, demonstrating accountability and continuously improving outcomes for New Zealand's unique marine environment.

Sponsorships

|                                                                              |                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Southern Seabirds Trust                                                      | \$30,000 to support ongoing conservation activities                           |
| FirstMate                                                                    | \$50,000 to support ongoing activities                                        |
| New Zealand Federation of Commercial Fishermen                               | \$2,500 Platinum sponsor of annual conference                                 |
| Outstanding Food Producer Awards                                             | Contra arrangement for promotion of the award on Seafood New Zealand channels |
| Ministry for Primary Industries Seafood Sustainability and Innovation Awards | \$25,000 main sponsor                                                         |



Clockwise from top left: Seafood New Zealand Chair Greg Gent presenting professor Kura Paul-Burke with the 2025 Supreme Sustainability and Innovation Award; Hon Shane Jones speaking at the 2025 New Zealand Federation of Commercial Fishermen conference; Seafood New Zealand Chief Executive Lisa Futschek participating in tākoketai (black petrel) research and conservation work undertaken by Wildlife Management International Limited; Seafood New Zealand's Rosa Edwards (centre) won the 2025 Seabird Smart Leadership Award, presented by Dame Cindy Kiro.

## Additional roles

| Name                | Group/Committee/Organisation                                                                    | Role                       |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Tiff Bock           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women in Seafood Australasia (WISA)</li> </ul>           | Board member               |
| Lisa Futschek       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commercial Fisheries Services (Fishserve)</li> </ul>     | Board member               |
|                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seafood Innovations Limited</li> </ul>                   | Board member               |
|                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Southern Seabirds Trust</li> </ul>                       | Trustee                    |
|                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seafood Industry Forum Subgroup</li> </ul>               | Co-chair                   |
| Dave Goad           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Southern Seabirds Management Committee</li> </ul>        | Inshore representative     |
| Aaron Irving        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Association of Sustainable Fisheries (ASF)</li> </ul>    | Executive Committee member |
|                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certified Seafood International (CSI) Project</li> </ul> | Steering Committee member  |
| Karen Olver         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women in Seafood Australasia (WISA)</li> </ul>           | Vice Chair                 |
|                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commercial Fisheries Forum (CFF)</li> </ul>              | Chair                      |
| Tanayaz Patil       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commercial Fisheries Forum (CFF)</li> </ul>              | Administrator/Member       |
| Carol Scott         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NZ Tuna Management Assoc.</li> </ul>                     | Executive secretary        |
|                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Port Nelson Fisherman's Assoc.</li> </ul>                | Secretary                  |
| Ben Steele-Mortimer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ACAP Seabird Bycatch Working Group</li> </ul>            | Observer                   |
|                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Southern Seabirds Management Committee</li> </ul>        | Deepwater representative   |
| Cathy Webb          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seafood Industry Partnership Group</li> </ul>            | Chair                      |
| Tamar Wells         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FirstMate</li> </ul>                                     | Trustee                    |
|                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seafood Industry Forum</li> </ul>                        | Secretariat                |

## Seafood Standards GM's Introduction

**The Seafood Standards Council (SSC) is a committee of the Seafood New Zealand Board.**

This has been another busy year for seafood standards, trade and market access as well as our work in the workforce space. We carried out our three-yearly review of the SSC, including a refresh of our modus operandi and work programme. Given the many changes industry are facing – including changing food safety risks, global trade politics and new market access requirements – it is important the SSC continues to provide guidance and advice in a timely manner, but just as important is to focus on some strategic priorities. Our updated work programme reflects this.

This year we saw a successful in-country audit from the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA), further reinforcing our robust regulatory system and industry commitment to food safety.

Of course, making the headlines in global trade was the implementation of reciprocal tariffs by the

United States Government, which for New Zealand introduced a 10% tariff in April 2025, rising to 15% in August. Despite this, trade with the United States remains strong and is comparable to that of 2024.

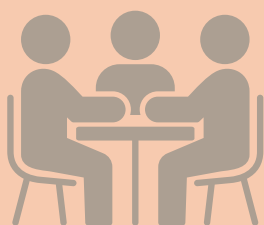
We continued to progress the Seafood Workforce Transition Plan, expanding our engagement with schools, universities and young professionals. And we further developed our resources, including the *Keeping it Real* video series, showcasing young people working in the seafood industry in their everyday roles. We also saw some positive visa policy changes for seasonal workers, and we look forward to working further with Immigration New Zealand on a full review of the Foreign Fishing Crew visa settings, scheduled for 2026.



**Cathy Webb**

*GM, Seafood Standards and Market Access*

## Seafood Standards by the Numbers



**3**

**Seafood Standards Council Meetings**

**19**

**advisories to industry**



**1**

**presentation to the US Food & Drug Administration (FDA)**



**1**

**oral presentation to the Health Select Committee (Gene Technology Bill)**

## Food Safety, Technical Advice and Assistance

Contaminants such as heavy metals, marine bacteria and biotoxins are naturally occurring in the marine environment and we continue to work with the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) and the science providers to support research needed to understand the changing risks and to ensure these contaminants can be managed, so we can continue to supply safe seafood and meet the access requirements of the many markets we trade with.

This includes work on vibrio, inorganic arsenic and mercury, and provision of technical advice to support the sector during marine biotoxins events.

Part of the SSC's core role is to provide technical advice and assistance to operators and exporters. The issues dealt with this year were again wide-ranging, from providing technical guidance around labelling, approved species names and responding to aquatic disease information requests as well as assisting exporters manage issues at the border that directly impacted consignment clearance.

## Market Access

In terms of market access requirements, this year we provided feedback and input to MPI on various countries' new requirements including Korea, Indonesia and Hong Kong. We also supported MPI and the industry with respect to the US FDA's audit to assess the New Zealand system, including presenting to the audit team on the industry's commitment to food safety.



Seafood New Zealand Chief Executive Lisa Futschek with Singapore's Minister for Sustainability and the Environment Grace Fu.

## Trade

### CITES

CITES is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, an international agreement regulating trade in protected animals and plants to prevent species extinction which New Zealand, along with 184 other countries, is a party to.

In June 2025, a proposal was tabled to list the following species on Appendix II of CITES:

- Shark species (*Galeorhinus spp*, *Mustelus spp*)
- Eels (*Anguilla spp*)

For New Zealand, the species impacted are:

- School Shark (*Galeorhinus galeus*)
- Rig/Spotted Dogfish (*Mustelus lenticulatus*)
- Eels (*Anguilla dieffenbachia* & *Anguilla australis*)

Should a listing on Appendix II be agreed, this would mean that a permit, issued by the Department of Conservation (DOC) would be required to continue to trade these species.

The proposal was considered at the CITES meeting in November 2025, where it was agreed to list the shark species (*Galeorhinus spp*, *Mustelus spp*) on Appendix II with an 18-month delay on implementation, but there was no agreement to list eels (*Anguilla spp*).

As such, we have worked with DOC to ensure they fully understand our trade needs to ensure their system can deliver the necessary permits within the time frames required for export.

### New Zealand – Gulf Cooperation Council

The New Zealand-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Free Trade Agreement was concluded in October 2024, and subsequently we have seen an increase in both volume, value and the range of species being exported to the GCC market since the agreement was concluded. The trade value of seafood exports to the GCC for the year ending September 2025 was \$26 million, up from \$11.4 million in the previous year.

# Trade Expectations for 2025-2026

## China

We can hope to see further progress of the arrangements for wild capture and aquaculture seafood products with the General Administration of China Customs (GACC) after their in-country audit, which occurred in October 2025.

The arrangements will provide an opportunity to address the approved aquatic species list and provide a framework for MPI and GACC to work collectively together, within the scope of seafood trade.

## IUU Catch Certification

The European Union (EU) notified new requirements for Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Catch Certification as they allow for digital exchange of data from 10 January 2026. It is likely there will be some bumps along the way as both the industry and the EU get up to speed and operate within the new system and requirements.

## People and Careers

### Immigration

In 2022, the Government prescribed an annual increase of wages for Foreign Fishing Crew, out to October 2025, when the median wage would then apply regardless of role or skill level required by the role. Through work with Immigration New Zealand (INZ) and Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's (MBIE) immigration policy team we achieved agreement from the Minister of Immigration to hold off moving to median wage (in October 2025) and to seek a full review of the Foreign Fishing Crew visa settings in 2026 to better align with those that apply to the Accredited Employer Worker Visa category.

### Workforce

In 2025, we continued to roll out initiatives in the Seafood Workforce Transition Plan, building on the work of 2024. This year brought broader engagement with schools, universities and young professionals as well as an expansion of our career resources.

### Attraction and Retention

- **Career resources**

We created resources targeting both high-school students and university graduates. The graduate booklet profiles five young professionals who are now working in the industry in a range of roles, highlighting their education and career journey. A hands-on activity '*Adventures with Otoliths*' gives students an opportunity to see how fish are aged and to get a taste of the science that goes into a successful fisheries management system. For our school leavers and potential career changers, we have added to the '*Keeping it Real*' video series, showcasing young people working in the industry in a variety of roles, bringing the suite of videos to eight and over 1,700 views.

- **Events**

We attended the major careers expos in Christchurch, Auckland and Porirua, and were part of the Careers and Education Hub



at Fieldays in Hamilton. We also exhibited at the Careers and Transition Education Association (CATE Conference) to connect with careers advisors nationwide. These events enabled us to further showcase the range of opportunities in the seafood industry and to continue to share positive messaging directly to the public.

- **CareerWise**

We joined CareerWise, an education social platform used by more than 300,000 students in around half of all secondary schools in New Zealand. Our twice-monthly posts – covering topics from “How do I become a skipper?” to “Science careers in the seafood industry” – continue to keep seafood careers and opportunities visible and reinforce positive messaging. Each post reaches 35,000–55,000 students nationwide.

- **Young Fish**

Young Fish, a network established by younger members of our industry, has continued to gain momentum this year. Seafood New Zealand provides administrative and coordination support, and has helped its members launch a regular newsletter and create a ‘Welcome to Young Fish’ brochure for new members. Young Fish attended university careers expos at Auckland, Lincoln and Otago universities to support industry attraction, and hosted networking events in Nelson and Christchurch as a way of supporting retention of our younger employees.



## Expectations for 2026

### House of Science

To further build on our engagement across the education sector we, along with Aquaculture New Zealand and the Rock Lobster Industry Council, are supporting House of Science to develop a Seafood Science kit, aligned with the science curriculum targeting primary and intermediate aged students, with work beginning in early 2026.



# Communications GM's Introduction

**With compelling and positive stories to tell in our sector, the comms team at Seafood New Zealand was pleased to continue the positive storytelling trajectory for our communications. The people throughout our industry have wonderful stories to share, which have the potential to be well-received by Kiwis once they get the chance to hear them.**

In 2025, we focused on sharing these stories via traditional and social media. Perhaps the best example of this is the sausage bait story, which garnered significant public attention and helped the team behind the project win some well-deserved awards. You can see more about this story on page 39.

We also increased our following and support on social media. The public does want to see and hear us. We launched two seasons of our recipe series – first *Zak and Tamar's Fishy Bits* in October and November, followed by filming and development of *Zak and Tamar's Sprat Summer* (more on page 40). These two chefs also happen to be a former skipper and a policy analyst and chef. They're a winning combination and together help boost confidence in how to cook with underrepresented and affordable seafood species.

We also launched our *Faces of Fishing* series in late January 2026. These videos are made either by us, other industry comms people or by the fishers themselves. They are simple stories of what our people are doing and why. Hearing them speak for themselves is powerful and important.

It attracts positive attention and comment, which is a heartening change for those in our industry who have experienced negative attention for many years.

That negative attention is driven in part by big-budget media campaigns that are anti-commercial fishing. This includes global outreach funded by groups which seem to have deep pockets and a deep antipathy to the work that we do. In some cases, these groups stray from the facts. We, however, cannot. Comms at Seafood New Zealand focuses on getting it right. We are committed to sharing facts about fishing, addressing misinformation and helping the public to understand the benefits of seafood consumption.

On a final note, we were pleased to update the nutrition information about seafood for public consumption. The results are startling. Seafood is indeed a health food and the details of its many health benefits are now prominently displayed on our website.

When this *Year in Review* is published, I will have left Seafood New Zealand for adventures in another primary industry. However, I can report that I am very proud of what has been achieved in 2025 by the team and am proud that we were able to help tell the story of the wonderful industry we represent.



**Fiona MacMillan**

*Outgoing GM,  
Communications  
and Marketing*

## Communications by the Numbers

All numbers below are for the 2025 calendar year.



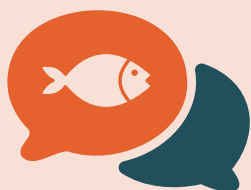
**14**

episodes  
of *Zak and Tamar's Fishy Bits* filmed across just  
**4 days**



**46**

weekly issues of The Update  
newsletter were sent to  
**2,632 subscribers**



Comment from Seafood  
New Zealand appeared in

**86** media  
pieces



**10,145**  
followers on  
Facebook



Across New Zealand  
media, there were over

**500**

articles and broadcast  
segments about the  
seafood industry



Our most popular post on social  
media – about *Ocean Bounty* host  
and producer Graeme Sinclair  
reached over

**77,000**  
people



**60**

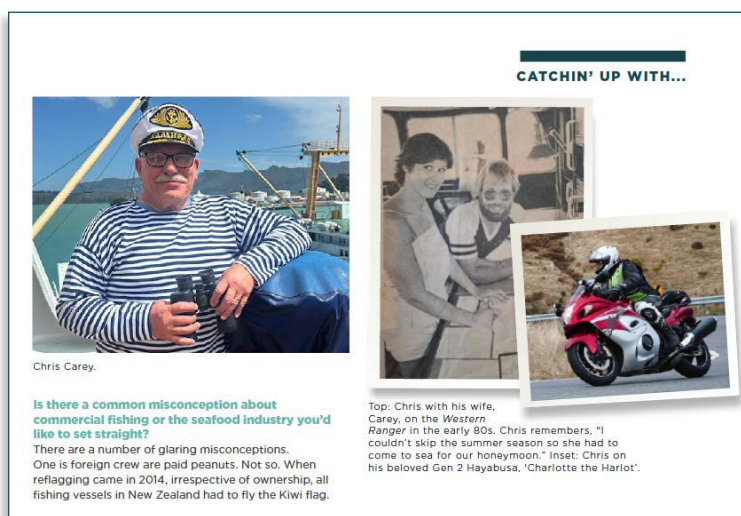
stories shared across four issues  
of Seafood Magazine

## Industry Communications and Outreach

### Seafood New Zealand Magazine

Our magazine continues to be popular. We published four editions this year, transitioning to a seasonal timeframe.

We thank our advertisers and our readers. In 2025 they were able to read about fishing people and technologies, history and innovation. *Our Catchin' up with...* series is particularly popular. This is a Q&A session with a character from the industry about their personal history in seafood. With so many interesting and chatty people in our sector, we expect this to stay popular.



### Seafood New Zealand Conference

On 6-7 August, over 250 delegates descended on the Rutherford Hotel in Nelson for the 2025 Seafood Conference, which was themed 'Seafood for Thought'.

Minister for Oceans and Fisheries Hon Shane Jones' announcement on 6 August that the Government would be progressing a key package of reforms to the Fisheries Act 1996 added additional energy and excitement to conference proceedings. Discussions of what the announcement would mean for the industry dominated news headlines and coffee cart chats – and attracted more than a few journalists to the media table. Seafood New Zealand Chief Executive Lisa Futschek had given at least seven interviews or statements by noon on the conference's first day.

Sessions across the two days covered a range of engaging themes, from leadership coach Harold

Hillman speaking to a rapt crowd on encouraging empathy and authenticity in leadership, to insightful economic overviews, skippers across the country participating in data and scientific research, and effectively communicating our story online and to the media.

As it has for the past decade, the official Seafood Conference proceedings closed with the Seafood Stars Awards. It was a moment for the industry to uplift the mahi of those whose work can sometimes go unnoticed, and to show appreciation for those at the coalface.

In 2025, there were nine winners over six categories, presented by Chief Executive Lisa Futschek. Of particular note were the two Life Membership Awards, presented to Tā Tipene O'Regan and Graeme Sinclair for their leadership and outstanding contributions to the industry.

## Beers and Ideas

We have a diverse industry, with kaimahi spread across the country in at least 17 significant fishing ports. Seafood New Zealand intends to reach as many of our people in person as possible, to share with them what is going on in the wider industry and to update them on the political and regulatory changes that will affect them. To that end, we started our Beers and Ideas regional visits in 2025.

In 2025, Chief Executive Lisa Futschek, Chair Greg Gent plus with a small team of senior staff, visited Port Chalmers, Lyttleton, Napier, Nelson, Tauranga and New Plymouth. In each location, we were joined by up to 50 fishers and local processing people, who asked great questions and shared their thoughts about local issues and how the industry can continue to improve. We plan to continue Beers and Ideas in 2026.

## The Update

Our email newsletter continues to be well distributed, going to over 2,500 readers each week. It reaches mainly industry folk, but also politicians, regulators and media.

The editorial is intended to contain thought-provoking ideas and diverse viewpoints. That's why we handed the pen to a number of guest editors in 2025, including Raewyn Peart from the Environmental Defence Society; Dunedin fisher Pat Nyhon; Max Mossler, the Managing Editor of Sustainable Fisheries at the University of Washington; Dr Richard O'Driscoll, Chief Scientist – Fisheries at NIWA (now Earth Sciences New Zealand); fisher Roger Rawlinson and more.

In February 2026, The Update was renamed The Catch(up) and shifted to a fortnightly delivery schedule.

## Talking to the Public – Media and Social Media

### Sausage Bait Success

A media highlight came in April 2025 with development and launch of the innovative 'sea sausage' bait to catch rig on a longline rather than a net. Keith Mawson from Egmont Seafoods and fisher Rob Ansley from Ocean Pearl Fisheries worked with Jerome Chua from Massey University to develop the bait, which is made 100% from crayfish waste products supplied by the Fiordland Lobster Company.

Seafood New Zealand knew a good-news story when we saw it, and worked with Keith, Rob and Jerome to build a media kit of photos, videos and media releases. Beginning with the Taranaki Daily News, the resulting story made national headlines across multiple publications – including in *Kia Ora* magazine available on Air New Zealand flights. Later in the year, Jerome won the 2025 Future Adaptation Award at the 2025 Seafood New Zealand Conference, while the entire bait project team took home the Operational Innovator Award at the 2025 New Zealand Seafood Sustainability and Innovation Awards.

Though an undeniably major achievement, the process also demonstrated the time and energy required to get stories out into an increasingly fragmented media landscape, and reinforced the importance of having good visuals to go with good news.



### Zak and Tamar's *Fishy Bits* and *Sprat Summer*

Our new video series brings New Zealand seafood to life in a way that's fun, relatable and inspiring. Hosted by Tamar Wells (former chef, storyteller, Seafood New Zealand Principal Policy Manager - Inshore) and Zak Olsen (former fisher, competitive BBQer, industry insider – currently working for Moana New Zealand), the series takes the intimidation out of seafood and shows Kiwis that cooking it is easy, delicious, affordable – and part of who we are. It is also an opportunity to subtly wrap serious messages in good vibes, particularly messaging around sustainability, industry innovation and nutrition.

At the heart of it all, we're encouraging New Zealanders to eat more seafood while building trust and pride in our commercial fishing industry. Across the two seasons, we filmed 14 episodes. The first six episodes garnered more than 50,000 views across Meta, a majority of which were by non-followers (expanding Seafood New Zealand's digital range). Feedback has been positive – audiences love the recipes, the banter and the duo's approachable tone.

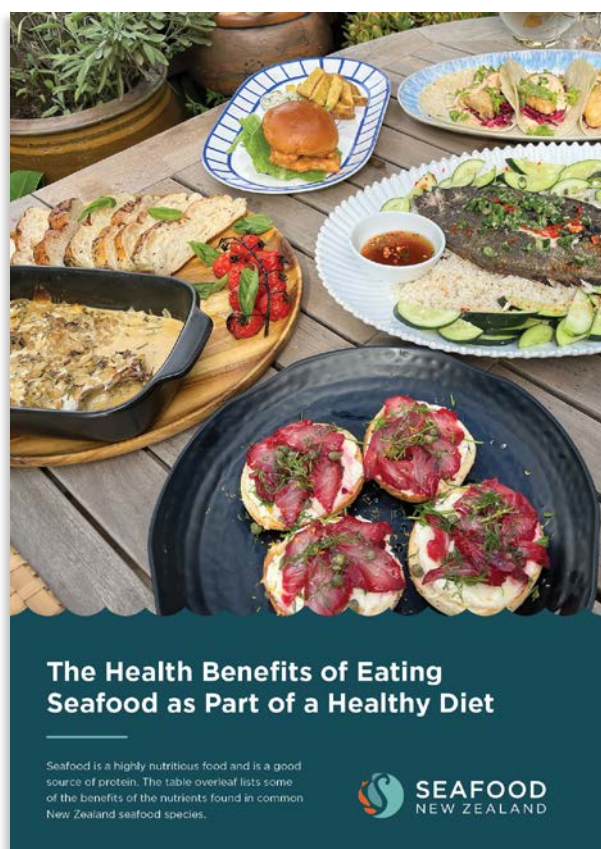


### Seafood Nutrition Toolkit

Throughout 2025, outgoing GM Communications Fiona MacMillan was also Chair of the Global Seafood Communicators (GSC) – a forum dedicated to advancing effective communication within the seafood sector. A major GSC project, produced in partnership with the International Coalition of Fisheries Associations and the Fisheries Resource and Development Coalition in Australia, was the development of a global Seafood Nutrition Toolkit.

Based on a robust 2025 scientific literature review into the health and nutrition benefits of eating seafood, the resulting toolkit contained multimedia resources its members could use to communicate the nutritional benefits of seafood around the globe.

In New Zealand we are restricted by the Food Standards Code as to the scope of nutrition information we can promote. But we are excited by the evidence that reinforces how seafood is a highly nutritious food, and we created a downloadable booklet outlining the nutrition benefits found in many New Zealand seafood species, available on our website.



# A Glossary of Fishing-Related Terms

**Aquaculture** – relating to seafood that is farmed rather than caught by fishing. Seafood New Zealand does not usually represent aquaculture-related activities (this is done by Aquaculture New Zealand), although we do work closely together and work for that sector in specific areas such as trade agreements, food safety and international standards. Many New Zealand fishing companies also have aquaculture interests.

**Benthic** – relating to the bottom of the ocean.

**Bycatch** – the capture of anything while fishing that was not the target species. This can mean other types of fish or non-fish species. New Zealand fishers work to minimise both kinds of bycatch, particularly the capture of marine mammals or seabirds.

**Deepwater** – related to fishing activity typically occurring outside the 12-mile line but inside New Zealand's 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

**Deepwater Council** – the Seafood New Zealand body that represents the interests of deepwater quota holders and fishers.

**Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** – the EEZ extends from 12 to 200 nautical miles offshore. In New Zealand, it is an area of approximately 430 million hectares, about 15 times New Zealand's land area.

**Fishing Related Mortality Limit (FRML)** – a limit set by the Minister for Oceans and Fisheries for the human-induced mortality of any protected species in any given fishing area. It is set to protect at-risk populations, such as certain dolphins.

**Green Weight Tonne (GWT)** – the weight of fish caught prior to any processing. It accounts for the whole fish, including head and guts.

**Inshore** – related to fishing activity near to shore, typically inside the 12-mile line, which is the area known as New Zealand's territorial sea.

**Inshore Council** – the Seafood New Zealand body that represents the interests of inshore quota holders and fishers. This Council is made up of four committees (see the organisation chart on page 8).

**Interactions** – interactions with protected species mean any capture of a protected marine mammal or seabird. The bird or animal may be alive and unharmed, alive and injured, or dead. It is required by law that all these interactions be recorded

by the skipper of the fishing vessel on which it happened.

**Longlining** – a fishing method using lines with hooks to catch fish. It can be surface longlining (SLL) or bottom longlining (BLL).

**Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI)** – the main government department charged with managing New Zealand's fisheries. It does this via its division Fisheries New Zealand.

**Operational Procedures (OPs)** – guidelines and instructions designed to manage and mitigate risks associated with deepwater fishing, in particular to reduce the incidental capture of seabirds and other protected species. OPs cover various aspects such as vessel management, reporting protocols and specific measures to minimise environmental impact.

**Purse Seining** – a fishing method that involves towing a net around a school of fish and drawing the net in. It is a low-bycatch method.

**Quota Management System (QMS)** – the system of checks and balances used to manage New Zealand's fisheries. Quota holders are allocated a Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) limit each year which changes based on data and scientific assessment.

**Set netting** – a fishing method that involves anchoring a net to the sea floor and then waiting for fish to swim into it.

**Trawling** – a fishing method that uses a net towed behind a boat to catch fish. It can be either bottom trawling or mid-water trawling. This is the most common method of commercial fishing in New Zealand. Trawling is often misunderstood or mischaracterised as damaging. However, modern trawling involves lighter gear and is usually done over the same fishing grounds, meaning benthic disturbance is kept to a minimum.

**Vessel Management Plans (VMPs)** – vessel-specific procedures and guidelines for managing risks unique to each vessel. VMPs include protocols for fish waste management, mitigation equipment and reporting requirements. They ensure each vessel minimises environmental impact in a way suitable for their operations and equipment.

**Wild capture, wild catch** – seafood caught by fishing rather than the harvesting of farmed fish. In New Zealand, wild catch is responsible for the bulk of our harvest tonnage and export earnings.

# Key Links and Contacts

## Find us

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## Contact us

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## Resources

### Catch a career

[seafood.co.nz/careers](http://seafood.co.nz/careers)

### Bottom trawling

[seafood.co.nz/bottom-trawling](http://seafood.co.nz/bottom-trawling)

### Seafood is health food

[seafood.co.nz/resources/seafoods-health-and-nutrition-benefits](http://seafood.co.nz/resources/seafoods-health-and-nutrition-benefits)

### Recipes

[seafood.co.nz/recipes](http://seafood.co.nz/recipes)

### Seafood Magazine

[seafood.co.nz/publications/magazine](http://seafood.co.nz/publications/magazine)



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