

Be responsible, be fast



BY **LISA FUTSCHEK**
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Seafood New Zealand CEO Lisa Futschek argues that when it comes to fisheries management, responsive decision-making is the responsible path.

Last week, I addressed a few of the major misunderstandings about the proposed Fisheries Act reforms. I clarified that on-board camera coverage is not going away – in fact, it will be as thorough as ever. Plus virtually all catch, whether returned to the sea or brought to shore, will be observed, recorded and counted against ACE (annual catch entitlements).

If the piece prompted you to examine any internalised assumptions about our fisheries management – or just to read the Ministry for Primary Industries' (MPI) consultation document yourself – I consider my job well done.

This week, I've got a few more misunderstandings to clear up with you. Namely, on how catch limits would work under the proposals and why they'd mean more meaningful opportunities



Improving the way the Ministry for Primary Industries manages fisheries is a win for all Kiwis, communities and our oceans.

to influence decision-making, not fewer.

Misunderstanding: the proposed reforms will take away the public's rights to have a say on fisheries management.

Given we at Seafood New Zealand are pushing so hard for everyone to submit on the reforms, it's hopefully evident we absolutely support everyone's right to have a say. To be abundantly clear: public consultation is here to stay, and we welcome that.

You will hear the exact opposite from opponents of change. They

claim that the public is being disenfranchised. That's not correct.

What the proposals do outline are ways to make our fisheries management more transparent, data-driven and responsive to real-time changes. With 642 stocks for MPI to manage, only 20–30 stocks are reviewed annually under our current process, and that's simply not enough.

The proposals outline a few main ways we can make our decision-making more efficient. The first is by allowing the Minister to consult the public on multi-year

catch limits. Note the important part of that sentence: "consult the public." The changes simply front-load the consultation and give everyone certainty on future management and MPI more time and resources to devote to actual fisheries management!

The proposals would also allow MPI to develop formal management procedures for catch limits and other management settings. We already have highly regarded precedent for using management procedures for some species globally, like tuna, to provide trans-

parency and responsiveness in fisheries management. The procedures would set out in advance what action will be taken when a fish stock changes. Formal consultation would still be required to approve any proposed procedure, and we would expect extensive engagement with stakeholders on their development. Additionally, the Minister would consider public views on whether to approve it or not.

And the ultimate misunderstanding...that the Fisheries Act reforms are a "scam".

Neither the government running this consultation nor the seafood industry (which I represent) are out to swindle you – that is the frankly offensive notion the word "scam" implies. As with all consultations, the public are being approached in good faith to consider the government's proposals and have their say.

Fundamentally, the proposed reforms make good, scientific sense, and enable us to be nimbler, more effective and to take advantage of new technology and information. Ultimately, improving the way we manage fisheries is a win for all Kiwis, communities and our oceans.

With submissions closing this week on 11 April, I once again encourage everyone to participate in the consultation process, get informed and share your thoughts.

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