



THE UPDATE

Captain's Blog



New Zealand's primary production sector fights back

Last month, the New Zealand Herald published a Rangitikei farmer's open letter to Jacinda Ardern.

In it, Andrew Stewart gently and politely states his despair over government environmental policies. He asks why he should consider carrying on in the face of 'such massive uncertainty about the future' with little control over his own destiny.

Sound familiar yet?

In Stewart's and farming's case, he is talking about climate change legislation, but his words could easily be used to describe the onerous and increasing regulatory requirements on the fishing industry, driven largely by environmental concerns.

And, in both farming and fishing the science behind the legislation is shaky.

Stewart says of farming; "We are signing up for generational obligations and tax based on guess work and not hard science."

Well, quite.

He goes on to lament the almost total lack of recognition that farmers are receiving for the incredible amounts of riparian planting and other environmental initiatives they have undertaken over many years.

Farming and fishing feel, justifiably, under attack but are no longer prepared to remain silent.

The Maui and Hector's dolphin Threat Management Plan is just one of the threats to livelihoods being faced by the industry right now but, potentially it is the greatest. Our people are under enormous stress as they face diminishing returns on debt-ridden assets.

Like the family farm, fishing vessels must produce to realise their investment and increasingly they are being prohibited from doing so because of illusionary environmental factors.

Stewart says; "I see daily the 118 years of care, devotion and respect that has been poured into this little slice of Aotearoa by four generations of my family. To suggest to me, as a sheep and beef farmer, that this farm and therefore my family are polluters makes me sick to my stomach."

We visited fishermen affected by the Threat Management Plan in Taranaki and Raglan last week. The pain is raw, and the stories are very similar. Small, family-owned, generational businesses who face elimination on the pretence of environmental concerns. Farmers have climate change and we have the Maui dolphin. Well, according to one fisherman, as far as threats to the industry are concerned, that is the closest crocodile to the canoe, but there are many others casting a baleful eye.

And like farmers, our fishermen have been looking after their environment for generations. They are conservationists and they are just as offended as Stewart at the depiction of them as environmental vandals.

Stewart's letter to the Prime Minister is just one salvo. The full-page ads that Seafood New Zealand is running in major newspapers is another. When science is no longer the basis for sound decision making, when people feel powerless at the casual disregard for the wellbeing of good, hard-working New Zealanders, they will feel they no longer have anything left to lose. And they will fight back.

Stewart says the division between rural and urban is at an all-time high, and anti-farming sentiment is a very real concern.

We understand. We really do. Our kids are being bullied at school because Dad is a commercial skipper.

These are skippers like Marcus in Raglan, who goes down to the wharf to pull hooks out of cormorants that the recreational fishers snag – or Mark, who has looked after a petrel colony under his deck on the Raglan Harbour for almost 20 years.

It would be an unwise policy-maker who didn't see the tide beginning to turn.

NIWA discovers one of the longest-lived fin fish

New Zealand scientists have recorded one of the longest-lived fin fish on record – an orange roughy aged between 230 and 245 years old.

The ancient fish was born in the late 1700s — and then caught in 2015 by a New Zealand commercial fishing boat on the Louisville Ridge, a chain of seamounts in the South Pacific around 930 miles east of the mainland.

The spiny, scarlet creature was hauled in by a trawl net from its deep, dark home more than 3000 feet below the surface, along with many hundreds of its schoolmates. But before it was sold and eaten, government extracted the otolith to determine its age.

“When you cut the otolith in half you see darkish and lightish bands similar to tree rings,” Peter Horn said, a fish ageing expert at NIWA.

Horn examined the otolith samples as part of a recently published [government report](#) into how the age of orange roughy caught at Louisville Ridge changed between 1995, shortly after fishing started in the area, and 2015. After two decades, he found there were fewer large, old males, and the average age was eight years lower.

A thin section through the middle of each otolith was mounted on a slide. When Horn picked up one particular specimen, he could immediately see the animal was old.

“You hold the slide up and think, gosh, it looks like we’ve sectioned a brick here,” he said.

Horn completed five separate counts, resulting in a variety of ages between 230 and 245 years old.

The oldest orange roughy previously found around New Zealand was 180, though older specimens have been discovered elsewhere.



The otolith, or “ear stone” of an ancient orange roughy, shown here, is dated via its growth rings.

Photo, NIWA.

The New Zealand Marine Values Survey

Victoria University of Wellington researchers are investigating how New Zealander's values inform their perceptions, attitudes and behaviours towards the marine environment.

Having previously worked in the commercial fishing industry, Hamish Howard is critical of how some organisations have chosen to demonise the commercial fisher and misrepresent the New Zealand seafood industry.

"Understanding those who you disagree with and representing their views as honestly and fairly as possible will achieve better outcomes for any organisation working to improve our guardianship of the marine environment," Howard said.

The New Zealand Marine Values Survey assesses an individual's values and opinions regarding the marine environment. The online questionnaire takes approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Any New Zealander aged 16 or over is encouraged to [take the survey](#).

All new Ocean Bounty

Ocean Bounty is set to air once again with a brand new season. Host Graeme Sinclair kicks off the season with a visit to the Fiordland Guardians – a group responsible for the effective management of the region's marine environment. They meet regularly and focus on what is best for Fiordland fisheries and environment. Recently a new set of challenges have emerged. Tune in to the season three premiere this Sunday, 5pm on TV Three.



News

By 2100, 96 percent of the global population may not have sufficient access to naturally occurring brain-building omega-3 fatty acids, *Phys Org* reported. Global warming may reduce the availability of Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), the most abundant fatty acid found

in mammalian brains, which has a crucial role in processes such as neuroprotection, cell survival, and inflammation. Humans are unable to produce enough of their own DHA and rely on obtaining the nutrient through fish, seafood or supplements. In the aquatic food chain, DHA is produced primarily by algae and the biochemical reactions involved in the process are sensitive to slight changes in temperature. The study found that if global warming continues, declines in DHA production combined with population could lead to 96 percent of the global production not having sufficient access to DHA from domestic fish production. People living in countries with large fish production and relatively low populations, such as Greenland, Norway, Chile, and New Zealand would still be able to consume the recommended dose of 100 mg per day. By contrast, the largest countries in East and South-East Asia (such as China, Japan and Indonesia), along with most of the countries in Africa could shift from producing an excess of DHA to falling below the threshold for the recommended dose by 2100. According to the study's model, global warming could result in a 10 to 58 percent loss of globally-available DHA in the next 80 years.: A decrease in levels will have the greatest effect on vulnerable populations and periods of human development, such as infants, and may also affect predatory mammals, especially those in Polar Regions.

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