

Queensland Aquaculture Policy Statement



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Policy statement

The Queensland Government supports the future development and growth of an ecologically sustainable, diverse and innovative aquaculture industry.

This policy statement articulates the Queensland Government's vision, initiatives and support for land-based and marine non-intensive aquaculture development in Queensland. To enable this development, the policy contains eight key initiatives which set the direction for the future development and growth of a sustainable, diverse and innovative aquaculture industry in Queensland. This statement also identifies core strategies to achieve the key initiatives.

The statement recognises and builds on the recommendations of the Queensland Competition Authority's (now the Queensland Productivity Commission) report on regulation

of the Queensland aquaculture industry, aligns with The Reef 2050 Plan developed by the Australian and Queensland governments and the Australian Government's White Paper on Developing Northern Australia, released 8 June 2015.

This policy statement is consistent with other State and Commonwealth policy objectives, including the National Aquaculture Policy Statement (2015), the Queensland Government's Sustainable Fishing Policy (2015) and the Primary Industries Ministerial Council's (2005) best practice framework of regulatory arrangements for aquaculture in Australia¹.

Background and context

Aquaculture is the fastest growing food industry globally. World aquaculture production in 2012 was 90.4 million tonnes. The contribution from aquaculture to the world total fish production in 2012 reached 42.2 percent, up from 25.7 per cent in 2000².

Seafood production from Queensland's aquaculture sectors, valued at approximately \$94.5 million, provides many benefits to regional communities including employment, skills development, income sources for marine service industries, tourism and supply chains. The sectors also supply consumers with great tasting, high valued seafood that does not place additional pressure on wild fishery stocks. Queensland aquaculture is a high

quality agribusiness based on Australian native species produced in an environmentally sustainable manner.

Impacts from aquaculture discharges are a critical issue for Government, given that most existing and potential future developments are adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef (GBR). Aquaculture waste contained in these discharges must therefore be managed to ensure the long-term health of the GBR. The Queensland Government recognises that this can be achieved by focusing future aquaculture development on selected, preconditioned Aquaculture Development Areas and the adoption of innovative technologies to treat the discharge wastes.

¹ *Best practice framework of regulatory arrangements for aquaculture in Australia* (Primary Industries Ministerial Council 2005) can be accessed on the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry website at www.daff.qld.gov.au

² Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Rome 2014.

Key Initiatives

To achieve the Government's vision for aquaculture in Queensland the following eight key initiatives have been adopted by the Queensland Government:

- 1 Aquaculture development assessment and operational standards based on scientific information and the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development.
 - 2 The adoption of a 'continuous improvement' model for aquaculture development based on a partnership between industry, government and research institutions.
 - 3 The application of a risk-based approach to aquaculture development assessment to ensure statutory conditions of operation are commensurate with the level of risk posed by the development.
 - 4 Areas suitable for aquaculture development will be designated and recognised across government as Aquaculture Development Areas (ADAs).
 - 5 Adoption of the hierarchy of "avoid – mitigate – offset" to address environmental impacts associated with aquaculture development in designated ADAs.
Avoid – Where possible, impacts on matters of national, State and local environmental significance will be avoided.
 - 6 Address emerging issues relating to the planning, development and management of aquaculture in Queensland through an agreed and coordinated approach between relevant agencies.
 - 7 Provide clarity and better linkages (development code criteria), including statutory accreditation opportunities (Australian/Queensland governments') for aquaculture development to ensure consistency and streamlining of aquaculture development assessments.
 - 8 Recognise marine non-intensive aquaculture as having a low environmental impact which may be compatible with general use, habitat protection and conservation park zones.
- Mitigate** – Impacts will be mitigated through stringent environmental conditions on aquaculture development approvals.
- Offset** – will be adopted where there are likely to be significant residual impacts on the matters remaining after all reasonable avoidance and mitigation measures have been delivered.

The Government's commitment to the Key Initiatives will be achieved through:

- Reviewing, where necessary, existing legislative and policy arrangements (regulations, operational standards and conditions of statutory approval) to ensure approval and operational standards are based on measurable ecological impacts.
- Actively pursuing a continuous improvement model, for example, review water quality discharge standards based on current scientific findings and ensure consistency with the Queensland Governments' Water Quality Guidelines 2009³ and the Australian and Queensland Governments' Reef Water Quality Protection Plan (Reef Plan)⁴.
- Developing assessment criteria for aquaculture development which will ensure that best practice methodologies continue to be adopted.
- Developing a detailed planning framework for the selection of ADA's along the Queensland coast. The ADA's will be site-specific based on their avoidance of sensitive areas and assimilative capacity for nutrients or based on the incorporation of new waste treatment strategies, for example, the application of bioremediation technologies.
- Where required, application of offsets to facilitate appropriate developments to ensure consistency with Commonwealth and Queensland State Government laws.
- Supporting targeted research on identified constraints to aquaculture production or new aquaculture species.
- Continuing to support the voluntary development and uptake of best practice guidelines for aquaculture, for example, uptake of the Pond Construction Guidelines.
- QDAF will co-ordinate a whole-of-government planning program to identify additional new ADA's on a regional basis for marine non-intensive aquaculture across Queensland, using Regional marine aquaculture plans based on the 'Great Sandy Regional Marine Aquaculture Plan' model.
- Adopting an adaptive management approach in the face of a changing climate.
- Fisheries Queensland within QDAF will act as the central point of contact for new aquaculture development investment inquiries and provide assistance with coordinating regulatory approvals.

³ Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (2009), Queensland Water Quality Guidelines, Version 3, ISBN 978-0-9806986-0-2. July 2013

⁴ Reef Water Quality Protection Plan 2013, *Securing the health and resilience of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and adjacent catchments*; Australian and Queensland Governments