

### Plenty of Quid – How About Some Pro Quo?

Many words have already been written about the Minister for Primary Industries' recent sustainability decisions in respect of SNA1, in which he seemed to adopt the philosophy that 'if everyone is equally unhappy, I must have got it right'. Among the many disappointments for commercial fishers must be how few of those words that have been written make any reference to the approximately \$5M+ MPI estimates that the industry will be required to invest to implement the new measures, over and above the huge investment that has already been made to the Precision Seafood Harvesting programme.

As well as a scientific tagging survey to undertaken before the end of the fishing year, the new measures will see all vessels in the fishery carrying VMS, and 100% camera or observer coverage on all trawlers by the end of the 2014-15 fishing year. The increased level of transparency that will result is something that industry should embrace for the positive potential it has to provide improved information to support good decision-making and to increase public confidence.

But where is the quid pro quo for this investment and enhanced transparency? This is not just an issue for SNA1 – improved information is important for all our fisheries and harvesting. There needs to be positive incentives for those making further investments to improve management. Increased TACCs would be good, but won't there also need to be changes to fisheries policy and law? – there will be an increasing need for amendments to the penalties regime contained in the Fisheries Act and regulations as high levels of camera and observer coverage become the norm across many fisheries.

Penalties for offences against the Fisheries Act and regulations are often described as draconian: high levels of fine, forfeiture of vessels, quota and other property, and even banning from the industry. And many offences are designated as 'strict liability', meaning the Ministry doesn't even have to prove that there was any intent of breaking the law. The Act specifically requires that judges passing sentence for fisheries offences must have regard to the difficulties inherent in detecting fisheries offences and the need to maintain adequate deterrents against the commission of such offences.

But, in the brave new world where cameras, VMS and observers make offending very much easier to detect, a large part of the rationale for routinely heavy penalties falls away. Industry and the Ministry share an interest in encouraging uptake of these measures, and their acceptability is bound to be enhanced if an operator knows they aren't taking on something that will hand the Ministry all the evidence that could see them put out of business, even for inadvertent or unintentional minor offending.

What's required is a review of the penalties regime that ensures that deliberate offenders get what they deserve, with the same heavy penalties for major transgressions but gives some credit to those who embrace the need for greater on-board scrutiny with more modest penalties when they are guilty of unintentional minor offences.

### Blue Warehou

Blue Warehou, WAR, came to front of stage this month when Seafood New Zealand selected it as their 'Fish of Month'.

They are fast growing fish that live on average 10 years and are mainly caught in the cooler waters off the east coast and bottom of the South Island. Only about 65% of the Blue Warehou 2012-13 TACC was caught last year, which some believe is due in part to the reduced charter fleet. While this is good news for the inshore vessels, as it means there is more ACE available, it's disappointing to see economic opportunities being lost because of New Zealand's reduced catching capacity.

Blue Warehou is one of those species that can be caught by inshore gill netters and trawlers as well the deepwater trawl fleet where it is often a by-catch of the squid fishery.

Andrew Stark down in Lyttelton says that their company only caught about 100 tonne of Blue Warehou this last fishing year, which was disappointing as it's an easy fish for them to sell and attracts a steady price. They mainly catch in October to November and their skippers are hoping for a better season this year.

See the media release by Seafood New Zealand [here](#).

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### Improving the way we trawl:

The good news about the new PSH trawl net, launched this week at the Seafood NZ conference, is that the fish caught in this new net are fetching a great price on the floor at the Auckland Fish Market.

Mike Sprague, AFM manager said, 'the PSH caught fish were being very well received by the buyers and are in extremely good condition fetching a significant premium over other fresh chilled product'.

The first underwater images released of revolutionary NZ fishing technology can be seen [here](#)



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