

Australian Aquaculture Portal About Us

Industry Snapshot

Large-scale commercial aquaculture (compared to commercial agriculture that has developed over centuries) is little more than 30 years old in Australia with new technologies, new breeds and newly domesticated species of fish offering great hope for the future.

Many Australian primary producers are taking advantage of Australia's clean water, a large climatic range and local scientific knowledge.... backing this burgeoning industry with high hopes for lucrative returns.

From the tropical north to the temperate south, more aquatic species are spending their lives - from egg to adult - in ponds on the land and in coastal enclosures than ever before.

More than 60 species of fish, shellfish and aquatic plants are being farmed in Australia, generating in excess of \$733 million annually making Aquaculture, one of Australia's fastest growing primary industries.

Aquaculture now supplies one third of the total value of Australia's fisheries production, and it seems our hunger for seafood just keeps growing.

Australia now earns over \$2.4 billion from combined fish and aquaculture production (a rapidly growing sector of our Primary industries), and the market is growing each year.

Valued at \$733 million, aquaculture accounted for 30 per cent of the total gross value of Australian fisheries production in 2001-02. It is estimated that this figure could triple to \$2.5 billion by 2010 if the Industry can successfully exploit its competitive advantages to meet increasing domestic and global demand for fisheries and aquaculture products.

In addition, recreational and sport fishing is a pastime for 3 million Australians who spend \$3.5 billion annually in pursuit of their fishing. The value of our commercial and recreational fisheries is enhanced by our freedom from many fish diseases that cause problems overseas. This provides us with a comparative advantage in both production and trade.

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Competitiveness

Seafood of superior quality allows ready access to overseas markets, enhances competitiveness and also provides value adding through the capacity to attract premium prices.

The dramatic increase in value is the result of a concentration on high-value species such as Atlantic salmon (Tasmania), Southern Bluefin Tuna (South Australia), Oysters (Tasmania, Western Australia & NSW) and Prawns (NSW, Northern Territory and Queensland). Emerging industries include barramundi, silver perch and abalone.

Research

Aquaculture is an industry that demands technically specialised conditions and a great deal of knowledge about the habits and life cycle of each fish species. It can take years of research to domesticate a new species.

Stocking densities, water quality, breeding conditions, animal behaviour, health and precise nutritional requirements have all to be worked out in detail to successfully harvest wild species such as Salmon, Bluefin Tuna, Oysters, Prawns Barramundi, Silver Perch and Abalone. And it is scientific and technical knowledge that is driving competitiveness in the industry, by improving fish health and nutrition, and by reducing stress, disease and the use of antibiotics and vaccines.

Mirroring developments in the green revolution, the blue revolution has seen companies breeding fish to improve traits such as their growth rate, conversion of feed into flesh, resistance to disease, tolerance of cold and poor water, and fertility. And this is only the beginning.

Disease Control

Disease-free aquaculture is a market advantage afforded Australia that scientists are striving to maintain, with aquaculture workers and the people who routinely visit aquaculture sites all having a part to play.

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Vets, government advisers, training Institutions, (recreational and sport fishers who are ideally placed to spot and report sick or dead fish at a very early stage) all have a critical part to play in keeping the Australian Aquaculture Industry disease free.

Just as stocking the ponds or enclosures too densely leads to a reduction in water quality, it also leads to a reduction in the growth rate of the farmed animals, and animal health problems, such as disease.

For this reason it is imperative that water entering aquaculture farms is of the highest quality.

Freedom from disease offers better market access and customer acceptance.

Atlantic salmon, plagued by diseases such as furunculosis in other countries, is relatively disease-free here in Australia, a status that helps achieve a premium price in Japan for example.

A loss of such status would remove a major market advantage.

Research

Fortunately, Australia has a long-history in disease detection and management for livestock.

The technologies developed to deal with disease problems on the land are now being applied to aquaculture.

The aim is to rapidly identify any new disease problem and have the tools and strategies ready to combat the disease.

It's vital for Australia to maintain its 'disease free status' and initiatives ranging from border controls and import certification through to enhanced Veterinary education and improved capacity to manage incursions of exotic diseases are being put in place throughout the country at both State and Federal levels.

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This integrated and planned approach on aquatic animal health builds on the efforts of both industry and government to date and ensures profitable and sustainable development of Australia's fisheries and aquaculture industries.

There is however much work to do and the continued involvement of all parties across all interest groups is essential.

The capacity of our Aquaculture Industry to contribute through exports earnings and 'job Creation' (especially in regional Australia) is a vital part of our future prosperity....a prosperity that can only be achieved by vigilantly protecting our clear competitive advantage as a 'Clean n Green' nation.... keeping unwanted diseases out.

New technologies, new breeds and newly domesticated species of fish offer great hope for the future...but only if they remain disease free!

([REF. Australian Aquaculture. Industry profiles for selected species.](#))