



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sealord, Aotearoa Fisheries and Sanford Call for Reduction in Hoki Quota

Sealord, Aotearoa Fisheries and Sanford would like a reduction in the Hoki Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) for the long term good of the hoki fishery, Sealord and Aotearoa Fisheries Chair Robin Hapi and Sanford Managing Director Eric Barratt said today.

They called on the rest of the New Zealand deepwater fishing industry to support a reduction in the hoki TACC, which is one of the options the Ministry of Fisheries has put forward for the 2007-08 fishing season.

Mr Hapi and Mr Barratt said the Ministry had put forward three options for industry consideration.

Two options keep the hoki TACC at 100,000 tonnes. One is the status quo, a hoki TACC of 100,000 tonnes with the industry catching 60% from the eastern stock and 40% from the western; the other suggests changing the split so more catch is taken from the eastern stock.

However the three organisations are throwing their weight behind the third and most conservative option which is a reduction in the hoki TACC to 80,000 tonnes with 75% of the catch from the eastern stock and 25% from the western.

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Mr Hapi said Sealord is New Zealand's largest hoki quota holder. "In Sealord's view it's a question of short-term pain for long-term gain. Recruitment of young fish has been poor, particularly to the western stock, and there is a strong scientific view that this is related to environmental factors.

"Since environmental factors are driving poor recruitment in the west, the best course of action is to reduce catches and give the stock an opportunity to rebuild."

Mr Hapi and Mr Barratt said a delay in reducing the hoki TACC would delay a rebuild of the western stock. "The 2007 stock assessment predicts that western stock will only rebuild if catches are reduced," Mr Barratt said.

Both said taking the hard decision, to cut the TACC, was important not only to the long-term health of the hoki fishery but also to New Zealand's reputation for sustainable fisheries management. "The key to a sustainable future in economic, environmental and social terms is to ensure catch rates are high enough to support higher fuel prices and exchange rates.

"We have the tools to manage stocks sustainably, through the quota management system (QMS), and that's one of the key reasons we received Marine Stewardship Council accreditation for the hoki fishery. A reduction in the hoki TACC will ensure there are fish for the future and reassure customers who, like us, are concerned about sustainability of fish stocks."

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Released: Thursday 5 July 2007

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New Zealand Hoki

Hoki is New Zealand's biggest commercial fish species and in 2006 was one of New Zealand's top export fish species worth \$156 million to the economy.

At one time hoki was a high volume, lower value fishery, but in the 1990s there was a huge increase in the quality and range of products being produced and hoki quickly became a star of the industry, providing many hundreds of jobs aboard vessels and in onshore processing plants.

In 2001 hoki became the world's first major whitefish stock to carry the Marine Stewardship Council Eco-label. The Marine Stewardship Council is an independent, global, non-profit organisation, which has developed a certification standard for sustainable and well-managed fisheries and MSC certification is independent verification that the hoki fishery is well managed and sustainable.

Hoki quotas remained around the 200,000 – 250,000 tonne mark until 2003 when declining numbers of juveniles in the fishery meant catch allocations were reduced to 180,000 tonnes. In 2004, they were further reduced to 100,000 tonnes.

NIWA scientists suggest changing climatic patterns, particularly the warmer autumns New Zealand has experienced since the mid-90s, as the key factor in the declining number of young hoki.

Hoki TACC

- At its height in 2001 the hoki Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) was 250,000 tonnes.
- In the 2003-04 fishing year the TACC reduced to 180,000.
- In the 2004-05 fishing year the TACC was further reduced to 100,000 tonnes.

Major Export Markets

Hoki is in demand all over the world. In 2006 it was New Zealand's second most important export species and sales totalled NZ\$156 million.

The largest markets are Europe and the United States, but hoki is also sold in Asia (Japan is an important market), Australia, the Pacific and the Middle East.

Products

Hoki is well suited for fillets, and further processing into a wide range of consumer presentations. It flakes easily and is also excellent for freezing as fish blocks. Products

include: loins and portions, fillets, fillet block, breaded and battered products, minced block, surimi, roe. By-products include fishmeal and fish oil.

Employment

Fishing

- About 50 vessels work in New Zealand's middle-depth fisheries, which means they catch hoki. They include fresh fish and freezer trawlers.
- Although Sealord has downsized its fleet, because of the cut in hoki quota, it still owns five vessels that catch middle-depth species and these provide employment for some 240 fishers. Sealord contracts another 5 vessels which are involved in the hoki fishery.
- Sanford has two freezer vessels targeting hoki on a year round basis and deploys three ice class vessels and four contracted vessels that target hoki in the July to September spawn season.

Processing

- Hundreds of New Zealanders are employed either full or part-time processing hoki products.
- Sanford processes fresh hoki in its Timaru plant during the July to September period utilising over 200 employees.
- Sealord's wetfish processing staff numbers range from 300 year round to about 500 during the hoki season.
- The Sealord Coated Products plant makes a number of products from hoki including Kirimi, a product for the Japanese market made from fresh hoki, and a number of retail coated products for New Zealand, Australia and United States markets. This plant employs around 240 staff.

Research

In recent years scientists have worked alongside fishing company technologists to optimise the value from seafood. Work includes: developing more effective handling techniques to avoid loss of freshness and improve eating quality; new methods and technologies for producing food that is safe and of the highest quality; new uses for marine extracts including cosmetics, dietary supplements and flavours.