



8 May 2017

Hon Barnaby Joyce MP
Deputy Prime Minister and
Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Deputy Prime Minister

Re: Developing an Aquatic Emergency Animal Diseases Response Agreement

The Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA) understands that the aquaculture industry has primarily been involved in the development of an aquatic emergency animal diseases response agreement (AEADRA). The involvement of the wild catch sector is ongoing and as an AEADRA for the wild catch sector has national significance the National Seafood Industry Alliance (NSIA) and the Australian Council of Prawn Fisheries (ACPF) have been participating in meetings with government on behalf of industry.

QSIA understands that the prawn farm sector has varying ability to control external impacts and disease introduction pathways, the ability to control the outcome is much stronger than for the wild caught sector where there is limited, if any, ability to control what occurs in the marine environment.

The benefits and costs of developing an AEADRA are not clear. Commercial fishers pay for a right to access the marine resource, and are cost recovered (through licence fees) for the resource to be managed and protected sustainably. It should be understood that wild harvest fisheries and industry's rights as they relate to the marine resource can be summarised as follows:

- Commercial fishers do not have tenure, they have a right to fish – a right to go fishing, it is not a guarantee of being able to catch fish.
- Commercial fishers therefore do not 'own' the marine resource.

The QSIA also understands that this aspect alone has seen considerably lengthy discussions between the NSIA and government about how a funding agreement should or should not be developed. There is a long way to go to agree this. It would be an extremely difficult proposition to develop a Queensland AEADRA given the many deficiencies of an agreement that cannot fully reflect the needs of industry.

An AEADRA is an insurance scheme, and whether industry joins depend heavily on the annual premium versus the risk. The wild catch sector should not sign up to an agreement against something that:

- Industry does not own; and
- Industry cannot see, quantify or assess.

To the detriment of commercial fishers Government appears to believe 1/3 Federal, 1/3 State and 1/3 Industry funding split is a fair split of responsibility for an emergency animal disease response. This is certainly not the view of industry. I note that your recent media release notes that the prawn farmers will repay \$4 million in the form of levies.

It is impossible for the fishing industry in Queensland to sign an AEADRA given the variation in species, jurisdictions, geographical spread. Further, I read into the offer of an AEADRA deed that industry has to assume responsibility for a disease outbreak in the marine environment. Commercial fishers have:

- No control of the policy or operational aspects of pre-border and border controls – that responsibility rests with the Federal Government.
- Farm based responses to eradicate disease, such as using chlorine on prawn farms to destroy white spot would not be allowed in open waters under State environmental legislation.

Queensland industry have been devastated by the white spot syndrome virus and this foreign pathogen has not entered our marine environment through any actions industry has taken. The Federal government's suggestion that industry is responsible for its recovery from a disease outbreak simply shifts the duty of care owed by the Federal government to industry.

The lack of an agreement does not constitute a failure on the part of industry when the agreement, as noted previously, is poorly suited to the way wild harvest fisheries are structured. If you have any questions regarding this correspondence, please contact me on M: 0417 631 353 or E: eo@qsia.com.au

Regards,

Eric Perez



Chief Executive Officer
Queensland Seafood Industry Association

Cc:

- 1 Senator the Hon Anne Ruston, Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources.
- 2 Johnathon Davey, Chair, NSIA.
- 3 Annie Jarrett, Chair, ACPF.