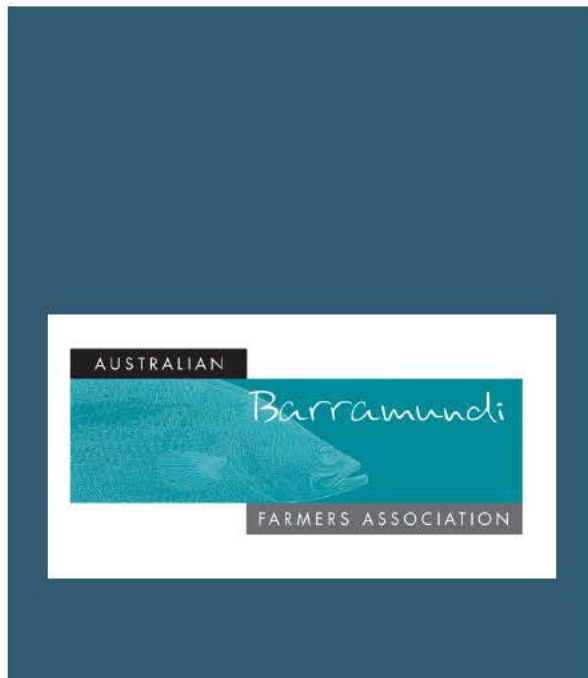


Agriculture and Fisheries and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023

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Australian Barramundi Farmers' Association

Submission to the State
Development and Regional
Industries Committee,

on the

Agriculture and Fisheries and
Other Legislation Amendment
Bill 2023

December 2023



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Introduction

The Australian Barramundi Farmers Association (ABFA) is the peak representative organisation for the Australian farmed barramundi industry. We exist to facilitate the profitable and sustainable development of the Australian Farmed Barramundi sector.

Our members operate in every mainland State and the Northern Territory. With farm gate sales estimated at \$125 Million in 2022-2023, the Australian farmed barramundi sector is enjoying sustainable growth and is on track to be a \$200M industry by 2025, providing economic opportunities for regional Australia.

Our Queensland members are responsible for approximately 43% of the national production of farmed barramundi, operating from the Daintree to Bowen. Aquaculture is an extremely efficient sector, with the land area allocated for barramundi farming in Queensland being approximately 100 ha.

During 2020-21, Queensland's farmed barramundi production increased by 19.7%, with 2904.4t sold in 2019-20 and 3477.9t sold in 2020-21. The value of Queensland's barramundi sector increased by 23.2%, from \$28.3 million in 2019-20 to \$34.9 million in 2020-21. (Fisheries Queensland, 2021).

The aquaculture opportunity

Aquaculture is Australia's fastest growing primary industry sector with gross value of production increasing by 5 per cent in 2017-18 to \$1.42 billion. In 2021-22 aquaculture is expected to be the dominant segment of the seafood industry, hitting a peak production value of over \$2 billion for the first time. (ABARES, 2022).

Globally, aquaculture produced 87.5 million tonnes of aquatic animals in 2020 with a value of around US \$281.5 billion, and the FAO projects production to increase by one-third by 2030, reaching 109 million tonnes. (FAO, 2022).

In identifying potential opportunities for Australian businesses to position Australia as a leading supplier of the world's protein, Food and Innovation Australia (FIAL) surmised that if Australian

producers were to restructure their food production mix and shift into higher value protein categories such as aquaculture or differentiate their offering through the adoption of new technology and innovations to match global protein consumption, they could capture up to A\$55 billion more in production value in 2025 as compared to a business-as-usual trajectory (FIAL, March 2019).

Aquaculture can form part of transformed food production systems that reduce overall environmental impacts. Australia has many opportunities to grow a responsible aquaculture industry, and while there are challenges to the development and operation of aquaculture enterprises, the potential to exploit these natural advantages and develop modern and sustainable aquaculture industries presents a compelling opportunity (CSIRO 2018).

The opportunities for sustainable aquaculture industry development in northern Australia are bright, with estimates that the overall aquaculture industry could reasonably expand by 2030 to five times its current production and achieve GVPs of greater than \$1.3 billion p.a. with an additional 1,400 – 2,300 jobs (CRC Northern Australia).

As demand for seafood continues to rise and Queensland's wild-caught fisheries reach ecologically sustainable levels, aquaculture will need to drive growth in seafood production. Queensland is an ideal location for developing a diverse, market-driven aquaculture industry, capable of supplying a significant share of high-value seafood to these growing domestic and international markets (Queensland Government, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, 2021).

ABFA response to the Agriculture and Fisheries and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023.

The Australian Barramundi Farmers Association (ABFA) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Agriculture and Fisheries and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, and hopes that genuine consultation and engagement will occur by the Queensland State government and the Department of Agriculture & Fisheries (the Department) regarding the proposed changes which has operational implications for Queensland's Barramundi farming sector, and Queensland's aquaculture in general.

While ABFA strongly supports Queensland Government's commitment to growing the Aquaculture sector and streamlining regulatory requirements, this must be delivered in a practical and sustainable way which also protects and grows food production and Queensland's food security, as well as the flow on of ongoing investment in regional jobs and local communities.

It must be acknowledged that our industry relies on a clean and healthy environment for their operations and support appropriate regulation to protect the environment and are caretakers of the environment in which they operate.

Whilst ABFA supports any proposed streamlining of regulatory licencing processes, it strongly recommends that these processes come with procedural fairness, reasonable time frames for assessment, reasonable cost structures and rights of review and appeal.

A table of responses is provided below.

Table of responses

Bill Clause	ABFA Response
159	<p>The ABFA is unclear about whether Resource Allocation Authorities will continue to be issued by DAF. Clause 159 (Explanatory Memorandum) states “The clause also omits subsection (4) relating to resource allocation authorities which will no longer be issued.”. However, the remainder of the Part continues to reference resource allocation authorities.</p> <p>The continued use of resource allocation authorities should be clarified.</p>
161	<p>The ABFA notes the reference to the inclusion of consideration of the impact of the <i>Coastal Management Act</i>, <i>Environmental Protection Act</i> and the <i>Marine Parks Act</i> on decisions to be made by the Chief Executive when considering whether to issue an Aquaculture Authority.</p> <p>Including this link to those relevant legislative provisions ought to aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen the Chief Executive’s ability to work with other relevant Departments [such as Dept of Environment and Science (DES)] regarding issues such as Environmental Authority limits, relevant species and other matters pertaining to environmental licencing. - Provide relevant science-based guidance to decision-making criteria. - Place emphasis on the importance of operational fisheries provisions, but not seek to over-regulate on-farm activities that should be the sole responsibility of the operator, provided EA conditions are met, such as nutrient concentration limits.
163	<p>The ABFA supports the Explanatory Notes’ commentary that a licence should only be refused by operation of law, and not by discretion. This is the only way to ensure business certainty, particularly if the Authority is one that will require annual application or renewal.</p> <p>The ABFA request that the authority be for a period longer than 12 months, given the operational capital, investment and certainty needed to continue to invest in aquaculture.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to the period of the licence and the application of further costs to operations to ensure the fee for holding an aquaculture authority is not onerous to operators in this already heavily regulated industry.</p>
166	<p>The ABFA notes the unilateral ability to impose regulatory conditions on authorities without the consent of the applicant. The ABFA does not support this provision without procedural fairness, rights of review and/or appeal and appropriate dispute resolution procedures and time frames.</p>
169	<p>The ABFA queries the definition of “associated aquaculture activity”. The ABFA recommends the use of notes or examples in this section, as this provision was not discussed in the explanatory notes.</p>