

QUESTION ON NOTICE
No. 1784
Asked on Tuesday, 25 November 2008

MR LAWLOR asked the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries (MR MULHERIN)-

QUESTION:

How is the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries ensuring aquaculture development in Queensland is profitable and sustainable?

ANSWER:

The Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries continues to take a strategic approach to aquaculture development in Queensland with an aquaculture planning program for the State. Planning initiatives for marine aquaculture include the development of strategic regional plans for marine and coastal land-based aquaculture.

This approach will provide greater confidence and clarity to industry, government and the community and reduce delays associated with site identification and assessment. This in turn will promote greater investment in the aquaculture industry.

The Department, with support from the Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry, completed a draft regional marine aquaculture plan for the Hervey Bay – Great Sandy region. I released the draft plan on 31 July 2008 for public consultation. The consultation period closed on 20 October 2008 and the Department is now reviewing submissions to develop the final plan.

A draft policy relating to the allocation of marine aquaculture authorities has also been developed and was released for public consultation with the draft aquaculture plan. The draft policy proposes a combination of non-competitive and competitive methods to provide a flexible mechanism for allocation of marine aquaculture authorities.

The Department was a sponsor at the recent Australasian Aquaculture Conference 2008 held in Brisbane. This biennial conference is the premier aquaculture event for the Asia Pacific region. The Department assisted with the trade display at the conference to showcase Queensland aquaculture companies and promote Queensland as a preferred investment location.

In addition, the Department continues to implement industry development plans and assist industry with the drafting of new plans. New plans have recently been completed for the prawn and oyster farming industries. Strong engagement with stakeholders in these plans is enabling the Department to better focus its resources and activities to assist the aquaculture industry.

The purpose of the Industry Development plans is to address significant industry constraints such as environmental issues and marketing to improve the capacity and profitability of aquaculture operators.

Industry investor updates are being prepared for each sector to promote aquaculture in Queensland. An investor update has been completed for prawn farming and updates for barramundi and oyster farming are currently being prepared.

Regional aquaculture extension staff work with industry, both to assist new aquaculture developments and existing Development Approval holders to support profitable industry development within a sustainable framework.

The Department also maintains a significant investment in aquaculture research and development. At the Northern Fisheries Centre in Cairns we are developing new technology for tropical rock lobster and tropical marine fish aquaculture. Industry has a significant collaborative role in these programs.

Finally, but significantly, the aquaculture industry in Queensland is well supported by aquatic animal health specialists from our veterinary laboratories at Oonoomba in Townsville and Yeerongpilly in Brisbane.

To ensure there is a whole of government commitment to aquaculture, I have asked that a forum be convened in early 2009 for key government stakeholders to discuss the future of aquaculture in Queensland. This forum will enable other agencies to experience the positive contribution that aquaculture makes within the State as well as discuss matters of common interest.

The aquaculture industry continues to remain buoyant despite the current global financial situation. This is a measure of the maturity and dedication of those involved within an industry that is becoming increasingly valuable to the Queensland economy.