

Question on Notice

No. 396

Asked on 10 May 2022

MR N DAMETTO ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES AND MINISTER FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the consultation meeting held between the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and invited fishers, which was held in Townsville on the 21 April 2022— Will the Minister advise when the department will conduct consultation in a public forum that allows all stakeholders to have their concerns heard regarding the proposed Spanish mackerel quota reduction due to come into effect on 1 July 2022?

ANSWER:

A recent stock assessment estimated the number of Spanish mackerel (biomass) to be approximately 17 per cent. A biomass of less than 20 per cent is the national trigger for urgent action to rebuild stocks to a sustainable level.

No changes have been made to recreational or commercial fishing rules for Spanish mackerel at this time and none will be made until consultation with recreational and commercial fishers has been completed.

The department has engaged in extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders and forums on the assessment and management of the Queensland east coast Spanish mackerel. This includes liaison with the working group, the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy independent expert panel, fishing tackle associations, industry bodies and individual fishers. An independent peer review of the stock assessment was also conducted.

The department released a discussion paper and online survey to seek feedback from stakeholders on possible management measures to rebuild the Queensland east coast Spanish mackerel fishery to sustainable levels. This discussion paper was widely communicated through a media release, social media announcements and communication with fishing tackle associations and industry bodies.

This first round of public consultation closed on 5 May 2022 and provided everyone with an opportunity to comment on the future management of the fishery. The department received 1 470 submissions, including 1 437 responses to the online survey and 33 written submissions. The vast majority of survey respondents were from recreational fishers, with submissions also received from commercial fishers, charter fishing operators and interested community members.

At the request of the commercial fishing industry, the department met with commercial Spanish mackerel fishers who are likely to be most affected by potential changes to future management arrangements. Meetings were held in Townsville on 21 April 2022, Cairns on 26 April 2022 and the Sunshine Coast on 3 May 2022.

Stakeholder feedback is currently being considered by the department. A further round of public consultation will be undertaken on potential management options before a final decision is made by Government.

The Queensland Government recognises the importance of this iconic fishery and is committed to ensuring we have Spanish mackerel to enjoy now and into the future.