

New Harvest Strategy Standard to guide fisheries sustainability



A new Standard for setting catch limits and related management actions for New Zealand's fisheries was approved in October by the Minister of Fisheries.

The Harvest Strategy Standard identifies targets and limits for the amount of fishing and size of individual fish stocks, along with management actions to achieve the targets and avoid the limits.

Adoption of the Harvest Strategy Standard will give everyone, with an interest in our fisheries: fishers; tangata whenua and other stakeholders, greater certainty about how sustainable catch limits will be set into the future. It also provides guidelines for when management action, such as catch reductions, needs to be taken to ensure sustainability of the fisheries into the future.

"In developing the Harvest Strategy Standard the best-practice approaches of other countries, and international fisheries organisations, were considered and adapted to suit our unique management system," says Dr Pamela Mace, MFish's Chief Scientist.

"Adopting this best-practice approach helps ensure New Zealand's fisheries management keeps its place at the forefront of fisheries management internationally."

The Standard will be implemented over time, primarily through the development of fisheries plans. These plans are currently being developed around the country in collaboration with stakeholders. Fisheries plans will incorporate the core elements of the Harvest Strategy Standard.

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If there is no fisheries plan in place for a fish stock, the Minister of Fisheries will take the Harvest Strategy Standard into account when reviewing catch limits and other management actions.

"Our fisheries are an extremely valuable asset for New Zealand. They are our fifth largest export earner. More than one million New Zealanders go fishing for food and enjoyment every year.

"Fish are also an important customary food source and taonga for Māori. It is vital we get the management right," says Dr Mace.

The new Standard will further enhance the ability of MFish, with stakeholders, to make sound fisheries management decisions and to ensure the health of the aquatic environment for years to come.

The Standard has been under development for more than three years.

The Harvest Strategy Standard is available to view on the MFish website under 'Consultations'.