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Committee Ara Tahī
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Aquaculture Reforms - Update

1. Purpose

To inform Ara Tahī about the legislative reforms being proposed by the Ministry for the Environment and the Ministry of Fisheries for the sustainable development of aquaculture.

2. Background

There is currently a moratorium on the granting of coastal permits for aquaculture developments. The moratorium has been in place since 28 November 2001, and will remain in place until March 2004. During this two year period, regional councils cannot consider any new applications for marine farms or spat catching activities.

The moratorium was brought in by the Resource Management (Aquaculture Moratorium) Amendment Act 2002, passed by the Government on March 25 this year. There is no provision in the Act for an extension of the moratorium.

Aquaculture in New Zealand has increased significantly in recent years, placing pressure on the coastal environment. The future development of such a valuable resource needs to be managed carefully and the moratorium will allow the time for some much needed planning to take place.

3. The Reform Proposals

The main reform legislation, which was to follow the moratorium, has not yet been introduced to Parliament. However, we understand that the reforms are likely to include:

- Streamlining the application process for new marine farms by providing a single-permit process. This will require changes to both the Resource Management Act 1991 and the Fisheries Act 1983 so that regional councils

can consider all environmental effects, including the use and sustainability of fisheries resources.

- Providing regional councils with greater powers to manage and control the development of aquaculture by requiring marine farming to take place within clearly defined Aquaculture Management Areas (AMAs). These areas will be included in councils' regional coastal plans.
- Allowing regional councils to call for tenders for the right to apply for coastal permits, including those for individual marine farm sites within each AMA.

Recent discussions with the Ministry for the Environment indicate that they expect another 'short delay' before the main reform legislation is introduced to Parliament. This is due to Waitangi Tribunal recommendations on WAI 953 - Ahu Moana Claim that further consultation with Maori is required on the reforms and their interests in Aquaculture. The Ministry for the Environment are currently organising a series of hui throughout the country to discuss the aquaculture reforms with Maori.

4. Next Steps

Staff are beginning to prepare a discussion document on aquaculture. This will then be used to facilitate consultation with the community, Iwi and other key stakeholders.

However, this is only the beginning of the regional coastal planning process and greater certainty is required from central government before the process of consultation, policy development and designating aquaculture management areas can be advanced.

5. Recommendations

It is recommended that Ara Tahi:

1. *receive the report; and*
2. *note the contents.*

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