Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor
Kaitohutohu Mātanga Pūtaiao Matua ki te Pirimia

Draft Terms of Reference (ToR)

[working title] Keeping Aotearoa New Zealand at the leading edge of global fisheries management

Background

Aotearoa New Zealand's fisheries are a significant economic, cultural, social, and ecological natural resource. Maintenance of this resource and respect for our taonga species requires management that ensures sustainability of fisheries stocks and the wider marine ecosystem. Aotearoa New Zealand has been among world leaders in fisheries management by employing a Quota Management System (QMS) for several decades. As technology has developed and international and national attention turns towards integrated management systems that combine the best of quota management with protection of ecosystems, Aotearoa New Zealand is well placed to lead with innovative approaches. This project seeks to support this goal.

The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment undertook a review of our environmental reporting systems in 2019. The report commented that:

> *Current fisheries management systems… rarely take into account the effects of fishing on the wider ecosystem.*[1]

The Ministry for the Environment reported on the marine environment in 2019. Reporting showed marine catch has remained stable over the last decade and that in 2018 68% of marine catch came from stocks that were scientifically evaluated, of which 84% were considered to be fished within safe limits. The report also comments that:

> *Stock assessments apply to individual fish stocks so they do not account for interactions between different stocks or interactions with the broader marine environment.*[2]

In 2015 Fisheries New Zealand undertook a Fisheries Management System review, and from this review they developed a major work programme called the Fisheries Change Programme to enhance and update the fisheries system. The programme is currently underway.[3]

A report in 2017 by The Nature Conservancy found that while Aotearoa New Zealand's Quota Management system has consistently ranked well compared to other countries against a range of global indicators, we do not routinely report on the ecosystem impacts of fishing.[4]

[1] See: https://www.pce.parliament.nz/publications/focusing-aotearoa-new-zealand-s-environmental-reporting-system
[2] See: https://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/environmental-reporting/our-marine-environment-2019
[3] See: https://www.mpi.govt.nz/protection-and-response/sustainable-fisheries/strengthening-fisheries-management/fisheries-change-programme/
[4] See: https://www.nature.org/media/asia-pacific/new-zealand-fisheries-quota-management.pdf

Around half of wild seafood caught in Aotearoa New Zealand is certified to the Marine Stewardship Council's (MSC) Fisheries Standard as well-managed and sustainable (compared to 15% worldwide).[5] Incremental improvements are made to MSC standards and fisheries must continue to improve their practices in order to be recertified.

Reducing the gaps in data and knowledge in the fisheries sector is important to ensure that fishing is being undertaken sustainably and to meet Aotearoa New Zealand's commitment[6] to taking a more integrated approach to fisheries management, which includes consideration of the wider environment and its inhabitants. This project will convene an expert panel which seeks to identify innovative technologies and methods that can be applied to fisheries to achieve these goals. It will provide recommendations on how Aotearoa New Zealand can move towards a vision for a modernised, data-driven approach to efficient and effective fishing which preserves this resource for future generations.

Draft Proposed Scope [to be finalised at first meeting]

The scope for the project will be finalised in conjunction with the expert panel. The report will include the evidence base to address the following:

1. A vision for data-driven fishing in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2040.
2. Is the current data collection robust?
3. How do data and knowledge gaps reported by PCE and MfE impact our fisheries?
4. How do these data and knowledge gaps impact management of our marine environment?
5. How can mātauranga Māori better inform fishing practices?
6. What new technologies are being developed and what innovative research is being undertaken in fisheries (locally and internationally)?
7. What other research, methods and technologies exist in other sectors that could be applied to fisheries?
8. How would an application and integration of new technologies, research or approaches reduce data and knowledge gaps in our fisheries management system and improve outcomes?

Out of scope

The research will not review or make recommendations on:

- Quota ownership and Crown obligations
- Aquaculture
- Recreational fishing including catch reporting
- Customary fishing

Process

- Draft Terms of Reference agreed with PM.
- Wide stakeholder engagement will be included with an open reference group process.
- The membership of the panel and wider reference group will be public and processes open.

[5] See: https://www.msc.org/en-au/media-centre-anz/media-releases/new-zealanders-choose-sustainable-seafood-for-future-generations

[6] United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (1992). See https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/about-doc/role/international/nz-6th-national-report-convention-biological-diversity.pdf

- Call for nominations of the expert panel and wider reference group will be sought from the key institutional contact lists. The panel shortlisting will actively seek to support a diverse and balanced panel. Expert panel approached and wider reference group assembled to guide the Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor in preparing the report.
- The report will be delivered to the Prime Minister and later made public on the PMCSA website.

Timeline of activities

Scope drafted – early February 2020

Call for nominations via key institutional contacts list – February 2020

Panel establishment – February 2020

Research and engagement – March to May 2020

Reporting - July 2020

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