



Submission for the Legislative Council Fin Fish Farming in Tasmania Inquiry

Circular Economy Huon

This submission suggests ways in which the application of circular economy principles to fin fish farming in Tasmania can reduce wastage, improve the environment and set up the industry for a more sustainable future. This will result in greater benefits to all Tasmanians.

Circular Economy Huon

Circular Economy Huon (CEH) is a community group in the Huon Valley that focuses on developing regenerative systems that are compatible with a healthy planet through working with business, government and any other organisation. We want to reduce wastage during production and consumption; particularly green house gas emissions (GHG), to improve and make living standards more equitable. The principles of the circular economy can provide short-term cost benefits today and some striking longer-term strategic opportunities. These principles apply to all spheres of activity, including aquaculture.

Recommendations and observations about fin fish farming in Tasmania

1. Aquaculture provides employment in regional areas of Tasmania and this improves the vitality and viability of smaller communities. People employed in aquaculture in regional areas stimulate the economy and support services. However there is concern that automation and advanced technology is already taking away some jobs and this is likely to increase in the future. Local employment is extremely important so that there needs to be a long-term workforce development strategy which anticipates changes and labour requirements.

Tourism is another industry that is regionally dispersed. While there is some interaction between tourism and the salmon industry there may be scope for looking at creative ways in which the two industries can benefit by providing tourism experiences. This could lead to greater employment opportunities in regional areas.

2. Newer fish farming facilities that are land based are minimising environmental damage and are delivering clean outcomes. Forest Home and Whalepoint facilities run by Huon Aquaculture are positive examples of where a largely closed loop system has successfully been developed with minimal waste going into water systems. It is hoped that these will set the standard for renovating older existing facilities and for the construction of new facilities in the future.

3. There is community concern that older facilities such as the hatchery at Lonnvale is drawing out clean river water and putting back dirty water. It is important that these plants are brought up to standard so that they don't continue to pollute the waterways.

4. Establish independently operated water monitoring processes and procedures for each hatchery, river lease and sea lease with ongoing real-time water quality results published online and paid for by the aquaculture industry.

5. Hatcheries, growing-on facilities and fish processing plants produce a certain amount of organic 'waste'. This waste can be composted to form a valuable input for other primary industries. A network of either open or closed container composting plants need to be established within a reasonable distance from the organic 'waste' source. This will mean that a number of facilities are developed across Tasmania. These facilities would be jointly funded, established, and managed through state government agencies, local government and the fishing industry.

6. The practice of packing fish into polystyrene boxes needs to change as once used they can litter the landscape and/or end up in landfill. Ideally the material and the system would be changed so that containers are returned, hygienically cleaned, and reused. If there is not a suitable bin available for multiple usage the fishing industry should be required to provide plant and machinery for recycling polystyrene such as that available from the Greenmax company, which can be set up to be mobile and move between municipalities, or establish a collection and processing arrangement similar to that provided by "ecycle solutions".

7. An independent financial audit needs to be conducted into the current state and local government fee and rate structures applied to aquaculture leases and comparison made to fee structures applied for fish leases elsewhere in the world with a view to ensuring that the benefits of using 'the commons' is enjoyed by both the companies involved in seafood and the general community.

8. Allowing for a reasonable period of time to introduce the system, all fish growing and processing organisations in Tasmania should be required to report their annual carbon footprint and state how they intend to reduce their footprint to zero emissions over time. It is anticipated that this will lead to the development of some creative on/in water clean energy generation development projects as well as the application of solar and wind technology. This initiative will also promote the take up of boats, cars and trucks powered by electricity, and hydrogen in the future. It could also stimulate an electrically powered boat industry in Tasmania and the Spirits powered by hydrogen.

9. Plastic waste in the water from fish leases and the fishing industry is an ongoing problem. While there have been ongoing efforts to clean up and reduce plastic waste it is still evident in coastal areas. There would seem to be some practices that are allowed to happen on leases such as drilling into black plastic that results in 'tailings' falling into the water and washing up on beaches which need to be stopped immediately.

Likewise, when plastic ropes breakdown small filaments remain in the water. Either better ropes are needed that don't break down so readily and/or there needs to be a systematic rope replacement program in place.

10. There are some sites that were marine leases but are now no longer functioning in that capacity although marine equipment such as old pens are still evident. These are likely to be breaking down in the water and adding to marine waste. An example of this is the lease adjacent to Satellite Island. There needs to be stricter controls applied to these leases so that if they are not in active use for say a year, the remaining equipment is removed and the site is inspected both above and below the water and the lessee required to return the site to an acceptable condition.

11. CEH supports the current practice that is employed by sectors of the aquaculture industry to reprocess plastic waste from the aquaculture industry through Enviroinex. It is suggested that records should be kept on recycling practices and increasing targets applied which would become a condition of continuing the lease.

12. CEH supports the ongoing investigation and development of bi-products from fish farming such as using fish skins and undersize fish and turning them into a variety of saleable products. This is a good example of applying principles of the circular economy and should be celebrated!

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