FRDC STAKEHOLDER BRIEFING

June 2020

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COVID-19 - CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic is moving to a new phase with cases in Australia reducing and some of the impacts also starting to reduce. While this is good news it is important people seek the best, most up to date information:

- The Australian Department of Health updates the 'Health Alert' page every day with the latest medical advice and official reports.
- For questions about testing or the welfare of people with the virus, contact your state or territory health authority.

FRDC COVID-19 Response

The FRDC continue to monitor COVID-19 and its impacts. We will provide any updates on the COVID-19 page on the FRDC webpage.

The starting point for FRDC is the welfare and safety of the staff and our stakeholders.

> *Safety First - The FRDC is strongly committed to a policy that facilitates work activities being carried out safely, and that enables all possible measures to remove (or at least reduce) risks to the health, safety and welfare of all stakeholders and staff.*

The FRDC internal COVID-19 procedure for staff is regularly reviewed. The goal is to move back to normal operations as soon as safe and practical. At present, meetings are still restricted to telephone and video.

COVID-19 Communications Update

Due to restrictions and impacts from the pandemic, the FRDC made the decision to modify FISH magazine's schedule, from quarterly, to two shorter, timelier COVID-19 relevant editions. The first was released in the first week of May and the second is due out in the first week of July. Efforts have been made to provide relevant information to FRDC stakeholders in relation to the cascading impacts of this challenging period, as well as to track the impacts on FRDC stakeholders through coverage in the magazine. In an effort to deliver relevant content FRDC has been soliciting suggestions and feedback on our website https://www.frdc.com.au/media-publications/fish/Feedback.

The FRDC's communications team has recently started sending out a weekly e-newsletter which goes to all our stakeholders. You can subscribe on the home page of www.frdc.com.au. The newsletter mainly focuses on information that can assist with how stakeholders can adapt to COVID-19.

FRDC Funding Round Update

Recently received applications have been assessed by the RACs, IPAs and Subprograms during March/April.

The COVID-19 outbreak has delayed the FRDC's process of application evaluation. Applicants can shortly expect to be informed of the assessment result of their application evaluation.

The FRDC did not have an April call for applications. We will alert our stakeholders using existing media platforms, when a future call is announced at a later point in time.

For more information refer to the FAQs on FRDC Research Projects: http://frdc.com.au/media-publications/fish/FISH-COVID19/FAQs-on-FRDC-Research-Projects

The FRDC's new Research and Development Plan 2020-2025

The FRDC's Research & Development (R&D) Plan forms a central part of the strategic planning process that drives organisational focus and impact. After extensive consultation with our diverse

stakeholders, FRDC's new R&D plan for the period 2020-25 is now with Minister Littleproud for approval, and is expected to be released in early July 2020.

The new plan responds to a shared vision for fishing and aquaculture, aims to deliver impact in five outcome areas, supported through implementation of five cross-cutting enabling strategies. FRDC's new plan is ambitious, aiming to push boundaries and drive experimentation on new ways to take fishing and aquaculture into the future. The plan aligns with key national targets and global commitments, such as the shared industry/Australian Government target of building agriculture to $100B by 2030, and UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Over coming months, we hope to work with our diverse stakeholders to develop implementation plans for each of the five outcomes described within the new R&D Plan. We will continue to provide more information on the FRDC R&D Plan web page. You can also share your thoughts and ideas to FRDC2025@frdc.com.au.

The FRDC Digital and ICT Update

In order to ensure its investment in research & development is discoverable and searchable, FRDC is trialling a portal that searches FRDC projects. The results in the portal are enriched by leveraging off-the-shelf artificial intelligence from Microsoft Azure which allows us to undertake activities such as *keyphrase extraction* (find out what's relevant in a sea of unstructured data). The portal is currently undergoing Beta-Testing but can be viewed at https://frdcprojectsearch.azurewebsites.net/.

For the 2020 version of SAFS, the authoring process has moved from Word documents to a fully online form. The form allows track changes, commenting, embedded charts & maps, and a live preview of the report on the web. The aim is to free authors from time consuming tasks and to concentrate on the most important part of their work, the content. It also aims to streamline consistency checks and error reporting in producing the reports increasing efficiencies and improving accuracy.

Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment Update

On 5 December 2019 the Prime Minister announced the merging of the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources with the Department of Environment.

Since the merge, bush fires and COVID-19 have demonstrated the potential that the Department can provide. This includes greater agility and synergies to the policies and programs that underpin regional Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry.

The focus for the Department is to protect Australia's natural resources and help develop strong agricultural industries. Work with stakeholders to ensure our land, water and heritage are well-managed, protected and productive. Core to delivering this is the involvement of partner agencies. Key agencies for fishing and aquaculture include Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA), Bureau of Meteorology, Parks Australia, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), Australian Antarctic Division and the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) to name a few – see https://www.awe.gov.au/about/who-we-are/portfolio for links.

Overseeing the Department is Andrew Metcalfe; who assists the five portfolio Ministers.

One area Andrew Metcalfe is focusing on is innovation – this is also a key area in the new FRDC plan. Delivering on the innovation agenda will be important if fishing and aquaculture are to play their role in helping Australia's Agriculture Industry reach $100 billion by 2030. Find out more on agricultural innovation here – https://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/innovation/vision-for-agricultural-innovation.

Submissions: Inquiries and Reviews

The FRDC has made submissions to a range of inquiries and reviews. Once they are able to be shared they will be placed on the FRDC web site (http://www.frdc.com.au/en/about/corporate-documents/submissions). Recent submissions have included:

- House of Representatives ***Inquiry:*** ***into growing Australian agriculture to $100 billion by 2030***
- Senate ***Inquiry:*** ***Impact of Seismic Testing on fisheries and the marine environment***
  UPDATE: The Seismic Inquiry has been delayed and will not report until 2021.
- ***Independent review*** ***of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999***
  Submissions on the discussion paper closed on 17 April 2020.
- National Agriculture Workforce Strategy
- Agriculture Levy Review legislation
- Sharing Australia's Commonwealth fisheries resources
- Independent review of the AGVET chemical regulatory framework

Standard for Aquatic Plants Names

Stakeholders are encouraged to submit feedback on the Consultation Draft AS 5301 Australian Standard for Aquatic Plant Names HERE by 15 August 2020.

The Standards Reference Body (SRB) will review responses, as they finalise the Standard for its first publication later this year. They will continue to develop and maintain the Standard, as additions and changes are required. This first publication might not initially have all the listed Aquatic Plants (that meet the definition), but the standard will be updated over time.

International – Decade of Ocean

The United Nations has named 2020-2030 a Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (https://oceandecade.org/). The intent of this proclamation is to support a common framework by which countries can reverse the decline of ocean health and improve sustainable development. A ten year plan has been developed and will be coordinated by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, and has been published at https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000265198 . The plan, entitled 'The Science We Need for the Ocean We Want' has as its overarching vision developing scientific knowledge, build infrastructure, and foster partnerships for a sustainable and healthy ocean. The primary goals are:

- To provide ocean science, data and information to inform policy for a well-functioning ocean in support of all sustainable development goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- To generate scientific knowledge underpinning infrastructure and partnerships.

Key societal outcomes include identification and removal of pollution sources, mapping and protection of marine ecosystems, increased capacity to predict ocean conditions, protection for people from ocean hazards, ensuring provision of food supplies, and open access to data, information and technologies. These outcomes will be supported through mobilisation of partnerships and increased investment in priority areas of marine science research, with a particular focus in Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States.

National Marine Science Plan Update

The National Marine Science Committee launched the National Marine Science Plan (NMSP) on 11 August 2015 at Parliament House. The Plan draws together the knowledge and experience of

Australia's marine research organisations, universities and government departments and more than 500 scientists, outlining the science needed to provide the knowledge, technology and innovation cornerstones that will grow a sustainable blue economy.

The National Marine Science Committee is currently reviewing progress in implementing the Plan With the view to also update priority areas. This report will provide a snapshot of progress against the NMSP's recommendations and celebrate key achievements. The report will also identify the major shifts affecting Australia's marine estate and population; and in response, suggest a recalibration of priorities. The draft is to be finalised by the end June 2020.

(For more information on the Committee and Plan: https://www.marinescience.net.au/ and https://www.marinescience.net.au/nationalmarinescienceplan/)

Community Trust in Rural Industries

The FRDC is part of the Community Trust in Rural Industries collaborative project, run by Agrifutures Australia, and jointly funded by the Rural Research and Development Corporations.

The project aims to explore the issues around community trust in rural industries. It will examine the risks, threats, and/or opportunities for primary production based on the community's trust. The project will provide FRDC stakeholders with insights into similarities/differences between seafood and other rural industries, and where there may be opportunities to collaborate with other industries for improving trust and acceptance.

Year 1 research results are now available from the FRDC project webpage - http://frdc.com.au/project/2019-042. Key messages from the first phase of the research include:

- Trust is important and offers producers the licence for innovation (to improve) and ultimately freedom to operate – but only when trust exists.
- The 'community' does not see Australian rural industries the way those who work in it do.
- Trust in rural industries is generally strong but levels of trust vary across the community and by industry.
    - Level of trust in Australian fisheries and aquaculture industries are moderate compared with other rural industries
    - 43% trust Australian fisheries and aquaculture industries; 39% don't know; 18% don't trust
- The research identified the three strongest drivers of the community's trust in rural industries as:
    - **Environmental responsibility** – having confidence that industries are using the land and sea in a sustainable, responsible way with minimal impact or damage, and not sacrificing the environment for profit.
    - **Responsiveness** – industry demonstrating that they are listening to, respecting and responding to community concerns and perspectives.
    - **Products of rural industries** – the community highly values the sector's outputs, from the nutrition they provide in the Australian diet to raw materials for Australian manufactured goods.

Priorities for industry to improve trust include:

- The community wants to know it is being heard and understood by rural industries and seeks ongoing reassurance that their concerns are being addressed. This requires industry to be responsive to community attitudes and to communicate any changes. The community does not expect industry to be faultless, but it does expect industry to proactively engage on areas of community concern, and in turn respond to breaking issues and crises quickly.
- There is opportunity for industries to respond productively and consistently. The research showed that one industry acting irresponsibly negatively affects their opinion of all rural industries. Having available guidance on best-practice approaches will empower industries to build trust in their own industries and in the sector.

- The community's main information sources are the internet, television news, television current affairs and social media. These channels can be used by industry to communicate action and engage directly with the community, particularly on those issues where large portions of the community were uncertain – such as whether rural industries listen to and respect community concerns, responsible water use and rural industries' waste products/run-off causing environmental damage to coastal areas.

An extra survey during COVID-19 found that levels of trust in Australian rural industries INCREASED during this period, highlighting that community trust can be changed or that COVID-19 has demonstrated how important farmers and fishers are to the community – namely people need food.

Future research will focus on which Industry strategies can improve trust in the longer term, with key topic areas including water use, animal welfare and food safety.

Sea Rogue screening

The first public screening of the short film *Sea Rogue* was held in NSW with the full public launch expected November 21, to coincide with World Fisheries Day. The film is designed to raise awareness and improve safety performance in fishing and aquaculture, produced by Millstream Productions and funded by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority and the FRDC.

The film captures the powerful story of the loss of the FV *Sea Rogue* off Ballina in 2008; where deckhand Michael Williams swam 15 nautical miles to shore in an attempt to find help and save the crews' lives. Sadly, the skipper Charlie Picton was lost at sea as a result of the incident.

SeSAFE

With the view to improve safety at sea, SeSAFE has developed an online safety training program, consisting of 42 brief training modules, covering emergency response, personal safety, operational safety, and risk assessment. These modules are designed to train new crew before they set foot onboard and to provide refresher training for experienced crew. They also complement onboard safety inductions. There is currently no cost for this training. For more information refer to: http://www.sesafe.com.au/ .

FishSafe Australia Podcasts

A series of podcasts have been developed, featuring industry leaders discussing workplace safety topics of relevance to the Australian seafood industry. Podcasts are available via the web on: https://www.podbean.com/ and search for '*FishSafe Australia*' or by downloading the *Podbean app.* from the App Store or Google Play. Future podcasts series are planned for the remainder of 2020, exploring the role of industry leadership in optimising safety.

This activity is funded by the FRDC as part of project 2017-231 'Seafood Industry health and safety toolkit'. This project intends to deliver a web based one-stop-shop to assist industry in maximising workplace health and safety outcomes through collating relevant information and resources. The planned outcome is to raise awareness and promote cultural change to improve the workplace health and safety outcomes for fishing and aquaculture.

For more information, contact the project PI Tanya Adams info@tayloredhealthandsafety.com.au

Blue Carbon Update

COVID – 19 has, like many other activities, slowed progress with implementing a Blue Carbon policy for Australia.

The Blue Carbon Method Working Group met in March to commence plain English drafting of a blue carbon method where the activity will be restoring tidal flow to areas where it has been previously excluded for some time. This activity will result in the establishment of mangrove fringes, tidal

channels and most importantly tidal marshes resulting in an increase in carbon stocks in both the vegetation and soils.

Since March, a smaller group of experts have met on four occasions to commence drafting suitable approaches to estimate carbon stocks and emissions through time and quantify the differences in carbon pools resulting from reintroduction of tides.

The Department is also progressing work on the longer term more research orientated Blue Carbon Roadmap. This Roadmap will review the potential for other activities to reduce emissions in blue carbon ecosystems. The Roadmap will identify what knowledge and data would be required to quantify emissions accounting and identify research gaps.

Colin Creighton, the FRDC representative to the Working Groups, noted that there is much to be achieved for both carbon sequestration and fisheries productivity, but still quite a bit of work to do. For more information: https://publications.industry.gov.au/publications/climate-change/climate-change/government/australia-work-on-blue-carbon.html

Cooperative Research Centres Update

- ***CRC Northern Australia Report on Aquaculture***

During 2019 a CRC Northern Australia funded project "Aquaculture opportunities in northern Australia: Solutions and Strategies" an FRDC funded workshop was conducted by researchers and aquaculture experts from James Cook University (JCU), CSIRO, Blueshift Consulting, Australian Barramundi Farmers Association (ABFA), Australian Prawn Farmers Association (APFA) and the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC). The aquaculture situational analysis project is one of eight industry situational analyses funded by the CRCNA and has now been completed and can be downloaded here - https://crcna.com.au/resources/publications/northern-australia-aquaculture-situational-analysis.

- ***Blue Economy CRC***

The Blue Economy CRC has announced the commencement of its research program. Seventeen projects of around 6 months duration have been commissioned to scope research areas across the research program areas: Offshore Engineering and Technology, Seafood and Marine Products, Offshore Renewable Energy Systems, Environment and Ecosystems, and Sustainable Offshore Developments. Full details of the projects including project leads can be found on the Blue Economy CRC website (https://blueeconomycrc.com.au/projects/).

New CRC Bids

The deadline for round 22 of Cooperative Research Centres is drawing to a close with bids due by 29 July 2020. Some of those of interest to the fishing and aquaculture sectors are highlighted below. The FRDC contact person is provided next to the title of the bid. If you would like more information or are interested in the bid, please get in touch with the nominated contact. More information on current and future planned CRC bids can be found here: https://crca.asn.au/category/bids/.

- ***Smarter Regions CRC – Kyaw Kyaw Soe Hlaing***

The Smarter Regions CRC will predominantly focus on terrestrial Agricultural Technologies (AgTech) but are open to the inclusion of fishing and aquaculture. Research priorities centre around artificial intelligence and smart technologies to address issues relevant to regional Australia. For more visit: https://smarterregionscrc.com.au/

- ***Thriving Coasts CRC – Chris Izzo***

Seeking to be industry focused, the Thriving Coasts CRC will develop integrated solutions to support the recovery and resilience of Australia's coastal industries, ecosystems and communities. For more visit: https://crca.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Thriving-Coasts-CRC-Information-Brochure-for-Partners-1.pdf

- ***Marine Bioproducts CRC – Crispian Ashby***

The objective of the Marine Bioproducts CRC is to transform Australia's emerging marine bioproducts sector into a globally competitive industry. For more information refer to: https://mbcrc.com/

- ***ONE Basin CRC – Matt Barwick***

ONE Basin CRC will bring Murray Darling Basin communities, businesses and governments together with researchers to co-design pathways for a sustainable MDB. For more visit: https://onebasin.com.au/

- ***Native Food and Agriculture CRC – Crispian Ashby***

The Native Food and Agriculture CRC will develop the production, processing and market development methods to meet and grow demand for Australian native foods. For more information refer to: https://www.dropbox.com/t/JcLTX4qjQ6SFEEuW

FRDC board meeting dates and locations

Date	Location
17 Jun 2020	Via Microsoft Teams Teleconference
19 Aug 2020	Via Microsoft Teams Teleconference

Projects approved since last update in March 2020

NOTE: some projects may have not yet been contracted

Project Number	Title	Applicant	Principal Investigator	Budget$
2019-062	Knowledge to improve the assessment and management of Giant Mud Crabs (*Scylla serrata*) in Queensland.	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries EcoScience Precinct	Julie B. Robins	689,479
2019-067	Investigate changes in acceptance of wild caught Barramundi in the foodservice and hospitality market sectors	Honey and Fox Pty Ltd	Jayne M. Gallagher	225,870
2019-099	Climate driven shifts in benthic habitat composition as a potential demographic bottleneck for Western Rock Lobster: understanding the role of recruitment habitats to better predict the under-size lobster population for fishery sustainability	University of Western Australia (UWA)	Tim J. Langlois	433,791
2019-104	Assessing egg oiling as a long term management tool for overabundant Silver Gull populations interacting with Southern Bluefin Tuna aquaculture operations	University of Adelaide	Lachlan McLeay	434,177
2019-106	Minor use permit for oxytetracycline in non-salmonid finfish	University of Adelaide	Marty Deveney	118,402
2019-126	Assessing the biosecurity risk of uncooked whole and eviscerated barramundi and grouper in relation to exotic viruses	Future Fisheries Veterinary Service Pty Ltd (FFVS)	Matt A. Landos	64,279
2019-159	Developing an independent shallow-water survey for the Western Rock Lobster Fishery: tracking pre-recruitment abundance and habitat change.	Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD)	Simon de Lestang	445,500
2019-204	Australian Abalone Growers Association Strategic R&D Plan 2020-2025	Ridge Partners	Ewan Colquhoun	25,422

2019-206	AQUAPLAN Development Workshop	Department of Agriculture; Water and the Environment	Olivia M. Liu	17,148
2019-208	2020-2025 Strategic Plan for the Australian Oyster Industry	Oysters Australia Ltd	Andy Myers	33,000
2019-209	Developing a guidance document for Whichfish Risk Assessment	Oceanomics Pty Ltd	Sevaly Sen	10,300
2019-210	Oyster Industry Response to the COVID-19 Crisis	Oysters Australia Ltd	Len Stephens	35,000
2019-211	Blue Economy CRC (Huon Aquaculture)	Huon Aquaculture Group Ltd	Matthew Whittle	500,000
2020-002	Quantifying the exposure, protection and recovery of seafloor habitats in Spencer Gulf to prawn trawling	University of Adelaide	Gretchen L. Grammer	314,535
2020-049	Mitigating interactions with dolphins in purse-seine fisheries: evaluation of acoustic detection and deterrent devices: Stage 1. Literature review and analysis of fishery data	University of Adelaide	Timothy M. Ward	60,000