



Media Release

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“We don’t like Zombies” – Commercial fishers urge action on pollution on behalf of Kiwis

New Zealand’s commercial fishing representatives are deeply concerned, but not surprised, by news today that aluminium pollution may be what is causing the ‘zombie snapper’ phenomenon in some Northland waters.

Seafood New Zealand is assuring the public that commercial fishers are well aware of the zombie snapper issue being seen in places like the Kaipara Harbour and are focused on making sure only safe-to-eat fish are being provided to kiwis.

Seafood NZ CEO Lisa Futschek says “Consumers should feel reassured that commercial fishers have lots of processes and checks in place to deliver safe fish to market. It’s the health of our oceans that’s the issue.

“Our commercial fishers are very experienced and they are familiar with this phenomenon. They know to avoid fishing in areas where this is happening.

“What really concerns us about this phenomenon is hearing that more evidence is emerging that pollutants may be to blame. Aluminium is being cited as a possible cause, because water testing in the northern Wairoa River has shown very high levels of the metal in the area. We want to know more as testing continues, and we await more definite findings from scientists, New Zealand Food Safety and the Ministry for Primary Industries. We do know that pollution and runoff in some of our coastal waters has been a concern for a long time. While our commercial fishers can often go further out, away from problematic areas, recreational fishers don’t always have this option. We want all New Zealanders to have access to safe-to-eat fish, it is such a key part of the Kiwi diet.”

The call from Seafood New Zealand comes as the industry prepares to meet in Auckland for its annual Conference. Pollution in some coastal areas will be one of the topics discussed under the Conference theme – Champions of Sustainability.

Lisa Futschek says, “We are totally serious about and committed to being leaders in this area. We want all of New Zealand to understand what goes on at sea. Our people see the condition of the oceans and are advocates for looking after it. We understand that hasn’t always been our reputation. But the truth is our fishers on the water want clean, healthy oceans where they can fish in a respectful and sustainable way, so they can keep providing great kaimoana to Kiwis.”

ENDS

Media are welcome to attend all or part of the Seafood New Zealand conference. To request access or for more information on this media release, please contact:

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