



Final Report

Project Title: Sustainable Management Framework for New Zealand Aquaculture

Project Number: 12-003

Date of Report: 26 January 2016

1. Milestone Summary Table

Milestone #	Milestone	Completion Date		Percent Complete
		Original	Actual	
1	Market Research	31 Dec 2012	31 Dec 2012	100
2	Pilot Audits	31 Dec 2012	31 Jan 2013	100
3	Certification Options	30 April 2013	31 July 2013	100
4	Industry Commitment	31 May 2013	31 July 2013	100
5	Draft new EMSs	31 Dec 2013	30 April 2014	100
6	Final new EMSs	30 June 2014	31 Jan 2015	100
7	Reporting/Auditing Tool	31 Dec 2014	30 Sep 2015	100
8	Brand Development	30 March 2015	30 Sep 2015	100
9	Final Report	30 June 2015	30 Jan 2016	100

Summary of Key Performance Indicators

KPI Description	Overall Progress
Optimal environmental programme agreed by grower committees	Complete
Existing environmental frameworks revised to agreed standards	Complete
Freshwater salmon framework developed to agreed standards	Complete
Self-reporting/auditing tool developed	Complete
Brand and marketing strategy agreed and implemented	Complete
Accreditation to chosen standard is achieved	Ongoing

2. Project Objectives

The project objective was to strengthen New Zealand's reputation for world-leading, sustainable aquaculture practices by developing a progressive, evolving and cohesive environmental management framework for our mussel, oyster and salmon farming industries.

Recognising consumer driven demands to demonstrate sustainability, the project also aimed to facilitate the adoption of a certification programme that would allow aquaculture growers to capitalise on the market opportunities that come from being a clean, green accountable and traceable, primary industry.

Finally, and most importantly the project aimed to provide industry with the tools to ensure it maintains the pristine nature of our waterways for all New Zealanders to enjoy.

For the most part these objectives were all essentially met although they did evolve slightly as the project developed. During the course of the time the project was running the industry evolved its thinking and priorities significantly toward achieving a social license to operate in New Zealand. While market opportunities were still a focus and will be available as a result of the project, the true value for the industry lies in new ways to engage with our communities on our shared goals for the sustainable future of New Zealand's waters.

3. Approach

The first phase of the project consisted of information gathering and options analysis. A series of stakeholder interviews, market analysis, a cost-benefit analysis and some pilot assessment of a selection of farms against the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) certification programme provided a good basis for decision-making about the second phase.

The resulting decision was that the best option for the New Zealand industry was to develop its own, unique, evolving and cohesive environmental framework that:

- Improves environmental outcomes
- Delivers operational benefits to sector participants
- Maximises market opportunity for New Zealand's aquaculture products
- Recognises the expectations of stakeholders and communities
- Enhances the sector's reputation for credible environmental stewardship

The remaining steps of the project were then designed to:

- Review and reissue the three species ECOPs so that they reflect current industry practices, the current regulatory framework, current market issues and leading global standards.
- Develop KPIs for assessment of compliance with the ECOPs standards
- Develop a protocol for scheduled third party assessments against the ECOPs KPIs
- Develop an online sustainability assessment and reporting tool for individual operators, third party auditors and AQNZ to score and improve performance across the agreed standards.
- Develop a brand story and communications package which can be utilised by AQNZ and individual companies to support the industry's environmental proposition, both in New Zealand and in global markets.

4. What were the main findings from this project?

Although the project initially considered a cross-industry adoption of an already established environmental certification the project allowed us to identify that a New Zealand specific programme would have the following advantages:

- We could build on the already positive reputation that New Zealand products have in market internationally.
- We could base the New Zealand programme on the current industry standards and practices and then extend them where necessary to make sure that they addressed all identified environmental risks and most (if not all) of the objectives of the international certification schemes.
- The New Zealand programme would not be 'in competition' with existing certification schemes– rather it would be a step towards them for those companies that required them for market or strategic reasons – it would also be a solid gold standard of sustainable practices for those that didn't.
- The New Zealand programme has unique advantages in engaging with our communities on our shared values – and throughout the development of this programme we have found that this is where it's true value lies. Ultimately creation of the New Zealand programme was a better fit for sharing our values with kiwis.



The outcome of the project was the launch of  New Zealand Sustainable Aquaculture – a world class sustainable management framework which enables the New Zealand aquaculture industry to better engage with our communities and continuously improve our environmental practices while strengthening global demand for our seafood.

The launch was carried out at the annual New Zealand aquaculture conference held in Nelson in September 2015. A wide range of stakeholders attended including those from Government, local government, science, ENGOs, the food and beverage sector, industry members and a range of interest groups. The media coverage included print and online media, National Radio and TV One News. The benefits of A+ were also recognised in question time in Parliament and promoted through a media release from the Minister for Primary Industries.

The commitment to A+ that the industry members have made by becoming part of the programme are summed up here:

1. Understanding and support of the A+ key principles:

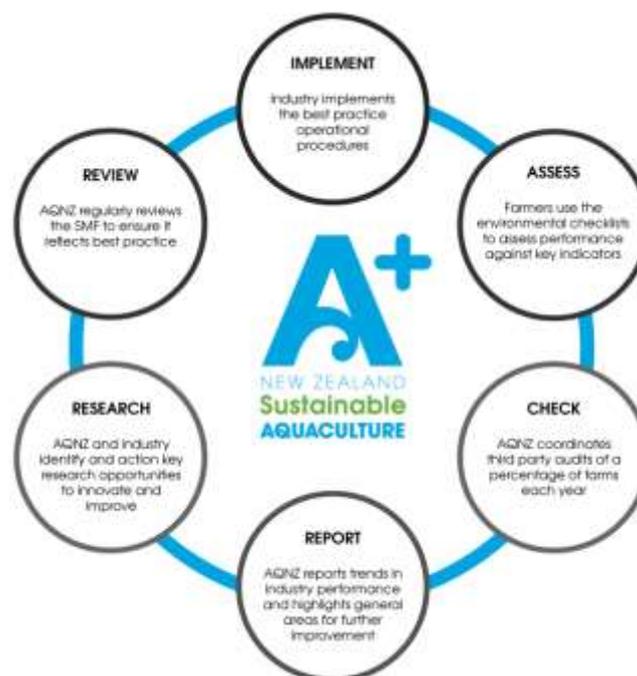
- Kaitiaki - care of people and place – through clear environmental objectives and best management practices
- Integrity – responsibility and trust – proof of sustainability through a system of self-reporting and third party assessments
- Resourcefulness – innovation and creativity – regularly reviewing our progress and identifying new ways to manage our industry sustainably

2. Understanding and support of the A+ key objectives, which align with those of world leading accredited certification programmes – and are our way of proving we are world-class guardians of our place and people.

- Healthy ecology
- Clean clear water quality
- Responsible waste management
- Efficient use of resources
- Guarantee of food safety
- Valuing iwi participation
- Enhancing our communities

3. Undertaking to participate in good faith in the programme by:

- Implementing the best practice operational procedures and ensuring all staff are familiar with these.
- Completing annual self-assessment checklists on ecoPortal for each farm that the company is responsible for.
- Participating in the third party external audits when they are programmed and facilitated by Aquaculture New Zealand.
- Consenting to aggregated KPI data to be reported on as appropriate by Aquaculture New Zealand on the understanding that no data will be released which will specifically identify individual companies.
- Identifying and engaging in research opportunities as appropriate for the improvement of the A+ sustainable management programme and the sustainability of the industry in general.
- Communicating any potential improvements that could be made in the programme as they are identified as well as engaging in the programmed reviews run by Aquaculture New Zealand.



More information is available on the A+ website www.aplusaquaculture.nz and in the A+ brochure replicated below.

5. What difference has this project made to your group / community of interest / industry?

An MPI research report, Public Perceptions of New Zealand Aquaculture by Colmar Brunton, identified the importance of demonstrating behaviours that indicate sustainability in order to gain stronger community support to operate. Sustainable practices (demonstrated and visible to residents) enhance perceptions of the industry overall. A+ is a great tool to help us achieve this.

Already a wide range of stakeholders, from both within industry and outside it have responded positively to A+. The following is a selection of the comments we have received:

Katrina Goddard (Forest and Bird)

“Congratulations on a very successful conference and launching the new A+ framework. I think it is a positive step forward for the industry. Getting all the farmers to sign up is your next challenge, but from the positive feedback hopefully this isn't too far away. I am keen to be involved in its on-going implementation from an environmental stakeholder view.”

Jonathan Porritt (Forum for the Future)

“Many congratulations on the launch of A+! I've just had a quick look at the website, which looks extremely impressive. And I was also very impressed to hear about the rapid rate of sign-up that you're managing to achieve with the industry – I think that is hugely encouraging.”

Pheroze Jungalwalla, (National Aquaculture Council (Australia))

“I am hearing good things about the new NZ Aqua Sustainability A+ Standard.”

George Clement (Deepwater Group)

“Well done on your A+ initiative.”

Bertrand Charron (Seafood Intelligence)

I'd like to find out more about the "A+ Environmental Sustainability Management Framework". This is a topic in which we are very much interested.”

Ken Swinney (Environment Southland)

“I am recommending that the Regional Managers' Group get a presentation on the new industry standard for aquaculture called A+.”

Janine Tulloch (Mt Cook Alpine Salmon)

“Our group is voluntarily entering into an agreement with ECAN for OUR version of best farm management practices using A+. This has been incredibly well received and aids in the creditability of our local industry. It allows us to be more interactive with ECAN and our land-based neighbours in this process. It is helping our local industry to collaborate.”

Ted Culley (Sanford)

“A+ is about full disclosure. New Zealand marine farmers have a great environmental track record and this will help identify areas where we can improve.”

Jake Bartrom (Gulf Mussels)

“We’ve been telling the world for years about our environmental practices. But it’s no longer enough to just say it, you have to be able to back it up and A+ is about proving to New Zealand and the world that we are doing a good job.”

Mark Preece (NZKS)

“A+ takes us a step further, strengthening our management practices so that all New Zealand marine farmers who meet the A+ standards, will also be meeting the objectives of all major third-party certification schemes. This will become increasingly more important as most major seafood distributors around the world move to only accept independently certified sustainable seafood.”

Andrew Hay (Mahurangi Oysters)

“As marine farmers, we are guardians of these waters. This is my backyard, it’s my livelihood and my future, and it’s my job to help protect it. A+ helps us do that, by giving us the tools to measure our performance and giving the public the ability to easily monitor that performance.”

Ben Dalton (MPI)

“The aquaculture industry is to be commended for implementing the A+ programme. It sets very high and very clear operating standards and then holds the industry publicly accountable to them. This will be a very important tool for strengthening community support and understanding and reinforcing the industry reputation for supremely sustainable seafood.”

6. If you did the project again what would you do differently?

There were a number of points along the life of the project where we need to change tack slightly, or take some more time, or reconfigure budgets between the various milestones. The really valuable element of working with the MPI SFF programme is that we were able to make these adjustments seamlessly and in the best interests of the overall objectives. For that reason, although we evolved our thinking along the way, and would have approached the project differently if it was started now, there were no identifiable things that could have been done differently during the life of the project.

7. Is there anything the SFF could have done differently?

We could not have achieved half of what we have without the financial support of SFF. As identified above though, the success of the project rested upon our ability to consult the very helpful Project Advisors and amend our budgets, timelines, and sub-objectives as the project evolved. There are no identifiable things that SFF could have done differently.

THE NEW STANDARD OF SUSTAINABLE AQUACULTURE



THIS IS MY BACKYARD. I FISH HERE. I SWIM HERE. I WORK HERE. IT'S MY JOB TO PROTECT IT. MY WATERS ARE BLUE. MY INDUSTRY GREEN AND MY FUTURE BRIGHT. I HELP FEED THE WORLD AND THE WORLD CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF MY BEAUTIFUL SEAFOOD. I'VE EVOLVED OVER GENERATIONS, CREATING GREEN JOBS AND INVESTING IN MY COMMUNITY. I AM OPPORTUNITY. I AM SUSTAINABILITY. I AM THE FUTURE. I AM NEW ZEALAND AQUACULTURE.

THIS PROGRAMME STANDARDISES SUSTAINABILITY FOR FUTURE PROSPERITY

The A+ brand story informs a stronger and more recognisable collective industry voice. Our unique sustainability story can reach a wider audience with the benefits flowing through to all New Zealanders and future generations.

A SUSTAINABLE FRAMEWORK

A+ is a world class sustainable management framework which enables the New Zealand aquaculture industry to better engage with our communities, continuously improve our environmental practices and strengthen global demand for our seafood.

A+ objectives align with those of world leading accredited certification programmes such as Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) and Best Aquaculture Practice (BAP) and focus on:

- Healthy ecology
- Responsible waste management
- Guarantee of food safety
- Enhancing our communities
- Clean clear water quality
- Efficient use of resources
- Valuing iwi participation

HOW IT WORKS

The framework formalises a cycle of continuous reporting, review and improvement. It provides a great platform for the community and industry to engage on their sustainability aspirations.



*Sustainable Management Framework



"As marine and freshwater farmers, we're proud of our role as guardians of this place and it's people - not just for now but for future generations"
Andrew Hay, Mahurangi Oysters

A+ provides the opportunity for all New Zealand marine farmers to have the practical tools to demonstrate transparency around our environmental performance. The practical guide recognises the value of innovation, ingenuity and individuality - qualities that, as a nation, we are known for and rightly proud of!

FARMERS' INFORMATION

There is no cost for marine farmers to be involved in this programme. Once a company signs up, there will be some time and resource commitments required for initial training and then inputting of data on a regular basis.

Industry members that wish to be involved should contact Rebecca Clarkson at AQNZ to register:

Rebecca Clarkson

Environment Manager, Aquaculture New Zealand
DDI +64 (0)3 546 2661
Mobile +64 (0)21 2442132
Rebecca.clarkson@aquaculture.org.nz

Alternatively you can visit the website for more information: www.aplusaquaculture.nz



8. Is there anything that you have learnt that would be useful for new project teams?

Industry and wider stakeholder consultation generally takes longer than you think it would. It is also incredibly important, as the industry members are the real on-the-ground experts that will ultimately guide and secure the project's success.

9. Where to from here – what are the next steps?

A+ was successfully launched at the 2015 New Zealand Aquaculture Conference in Nelson with a number of key industry, council, Government and ENGO delegates expressing positive support for the programme.

A key and repeated message from supporters was that it will be crucial to ensure that industry engages with the programme and that we can demonstrate authenticity on an ongoing basis. This will be important for Aquaculture New Zealand to guide – but for individual industry members to undertake.

Already half of the industry's farms are 'signed up' to the programme. During 2016 Aquaculture New Zealand will focus on:

- Extending membership towards its goal of having 95% of the industry participating by April 2017.
- Facilitating the ongoing independent audits of a proportion of participants each year
- Continuing to engage with key stakeholders on the programme as it is and potential improvements
- Further development of the A+ website to develop the 'live' industry sustainability dashboard
- Further engagement with key stakeholders including community groups and regional councils
- Liaison with international aquaculture certification agencies such as ASC, BAP and GSSI
- Investigation of trademark opportunities in key export markets
- Consideration of future collateral opportunities/requirements
- Brand presence at key local seafood events such as the Auckland Seafood festival
- Training/workshops in key growing areas
- Utilising social media platforms to raise awareness and engage with interested parties both within New Zealand and overseas

10. Financial summary

The project ended on budget for cash and in-kind contributions.

11. List and attach any major outputs from the project.

The three species Sustainable Management Frameworks are available to download on the A+ website www.aplusaquaculture.nz