

New Zealand's Quota Management System (QMS)

The QMS helps ensure sustainable utilisation of fisheries resources through the direct control of harvest levels for each species in a nominated geographical area. A fish species can consist of numerous geographically isolated and biologically distinct populations. Each fish species in the QMS is subdivided into separate fish stocks defined by Quota Management Areas (QMAs).

New Zealand currently has 97 species (or species groupings) subject to the QMS. These species are divided into 629 separate stocks. Each stock is managed independently to help ensure the sustainable utilisation of that fishery.

QMAs for a species are determined on introduction of that species into the QMS. QMAs are based on a combination of biological and administrative factors at the time of introduction. The starting point for determining QMA boundaries for each species are the ten Fisheries Management Areas (FMAs) which define New Zealand's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

While most species in the QMS are managed independently, sometimes groups of species are considered together for management purposes. These groups tend to be either groups of similar species:

- Caught together; or
- Where identification or differentiation by fishers is difficult.

The QMS stock flatfish includes seven different species within a defined QMA. There is limited ability, once a stock is introduced into the QMS, for QMAs or stock definitions to change.

Owing to the nature of fish populations some QMAs incorporate multiple FMAs while others cover only part of a single FMA.

Managing fish stocks in QMAs allows us to maintain more control over population size so that we can more easily provide our Minister with advice on sustainable catch levels at a finer level.

The fishing year for most fisheries is from 1 October to 30 September. However, the fishing year for rock lobster and southern blue whiting, as well as some other minor stocks, is from 1 April to 30 March. The fishing year for Lake Ellesmere eels is from 1 February to 31 January.

The Fisheries (Registers) Regulations 2001 require the Ministry of Fisheries Chief Executive to keep the following public registers; quota, ACE, permits, fishing vessels, automatic location communicator, high seas permit, fish farmer and aquaculture agreement. These registers are operated by FishServe.

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