Barra, Pearls and Prawns -
The Future of Top End Aquaculture

Kon Vatskalis MLA
Minister for Fisheries

The Northern Territory’s emerging aquaculture industry is set to more than quadruple in value by 2010, according to a new development plan released today.

Fisheries Minister, Kon Vatskalis, said the new development plan - *Farming the future – 2010* - highlights the growth areas of barramundi, prawns and pearl farming, as well as exciting new prospects such as sea cucumbers, mud crabs and sea sponges.

“These are exciting and prosperous times for aquaculture. The industry is currently worth $25 million a year to the Territory, but is on track for a combined value of $120 million within five years,” said Mr Vatskalis.

*Farming the future – 2010* sets out nine strategic areas to be addressed by Government, industry and stakeholders to ensure growth targets are met, and importantly, that the industry is developed in an environmentally responsible and sustainable manner.

“The future of the aquaculture industry depends on sound environmental management and the industry is keen to promote the fact that aquaculture is being developed according to recognised guidelines for ecological sustainability.”

Mr Vatskalis said the Northern Territory Government is also committed to the ecologically sustainable development of a vibrant and viable aquaculture industry and recognises the significant economic and social benefits that Territorians may reap in coming years.

*Farming the future - 2010* also promotes and supports the involvement of indigenous communities in aquaculture and encourages the development and implementation of technology appropriate to remote communities.

“The current trials of sea sponge farming near Maningrida and Goulburn Island is the perfect example of an activity that is potentially suitable for remote communities,” said Mr Vatskalis.

“Farmed barramundi production is also showing encouraging signs, with a 300% increase in production in 2003, and one million new Territorians – in the form of barramundi fingerlings - this year.

“This is all about Government and stakeholders working hand in hand to keep the Territory moving ahead.”

The content of this plan is to be reviewed annually to assess performance and to ensure that the strategic actions remain relevant to the future growth of the Northern Territory’s aquaculture industry.