

The Office of Hon Phil Heatley
Minister of Fisheries
Parliament Buildings
Freeport Parliament
PO BOX 18888
WELLINGTON

17 November 2009

Dear Minister Heatley,

We, the Northland non-commercial fishing forum have discussed and strongly support full observer coverage on foreign charter vessels (FCVs).

We are concerned that the current level of observer coverage on FCVs is inadequate to effectively monitor the fishing practices and catch reporting on these vessels. As the Ministry of Fisheries is the organisation responsible for the effective management of New Zealand's fishing industry and the integrity of the quota management system, we believe that the Ministry should initiate complete observer coverage on FCVs.

We are particularly concerned by evidence presented in the TV programme 'The Great NZ Fishing Scandal' of misreporting of landed species on FCVs. We acknowledge that observers have a presence in some of the fisheries in which the FCV fleet operates. However, we suggest that nothing less than 100 per cent observer coverage is acceptable for FCVs. This should be 24 hour, 7 days a week coverage on FCVs over 30 meters. This would necessitate two observers per vessel. The cost of independent observers and the time taken to check reported catch against observed catch should be fully funded by the fishery company. While we recognise that fishing companies will incur additional costs to implement such observer coverage they are free of many of the operating costs incurred by NZ owned and crewed vessels.

The Ministry has committed to strive for sound governance arrangements that are accountable, responsible, dynamic and transparent. Furthermore, 'Fisheries 2030' identifies a requirement of a sound governance approach being that the public having confidence and trust in the effectiveness and integrity of the fisheries management regime. Strengthening observer coverage on FCVs is the only means of achieving this public confidence. Companies must be able to prove they are working within the legal framework of the Quota Management System set out by the Fisheries Act 1996.

We note that significant observer coverage has occurred in other fisheries, including the high seas in the Western and Central Pacific where the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission now requires 100 per cent observer coverage between August 1 and September 30 to monitor the prohibition on the use of fish aggregating devices in the purse seine fishery. This proves that even where difficult logistics and costs are associated with observer programmes, full coverage is possible.

New Zealand claims to be a leader in fisheries management. We believe that full observer coverage presents an opportunity for the Ministry to strengthen this reputation and fulfil its

obligation to deliver sustainable fisheries management. We urge you and the Ministry to develop a 100 per cent observer coverage programme for FCVs.

Yours sincerely,

Members of the Northland non-commercial fishing forum:

Mr Paul Batten
Mr Doug Carter
Mr John Chibnall
Mr Hamish Faire
Mr Ron Fenwick
Mr Graeme Heapy
Mr John Holdsworth
Mr Simon Howard
Mr Doug McCall
Mr Geoff Stone
Mr John Torr