

Media Release: For Immediate Use

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### **New Zealand Hoki Quota Owners Proactively Choosing to Reduce Catch**

Quota owners in the New Zealand hoki fishing industry have announced today they have proactively chosen to reduce the amount of hoki they will catch next year, in response to changing patterns they are observing in one of the five hoki fishing grounds.

Hoki is the largest New Zealand fishery and represents around a quarter of all fish allowed to be caught commercially in New Zealand waters.

The decision includes shelving 20,000 tonnes of West Coast quota, which represents a 22% catch reduction. At the same time, industry leaders have agreed there will be no carryover of any uncaught West Coast quota from the 2017/18 fishing year.

The decision was not taken lightly, but representatives of New Zealand's major deepwater fishing companies say they decided to act on the changing patterns of distribution they are seeing.

Tom Birdsall, Chair of the Deepwater Group says the changes on the West Coast of the South Island are being closely monitored.

"Hoki are there in good numbers in areas inside the 25 mile line, closer to the coast, and we have also had a good season in the Cook Strait, on the Chatham Rise and in the Sub-Antarctic. But outside the 25 mile line, on the West Coast of New Zealand, fewer hoki have turned up than expected. We decided to act now, to make sure we are doing the best thing possible for the fishery."

Doug Paulin, GM of Sealord says "we prefer to be conservative in our approach so that we can have a positive influence on the hoki fishery and give it the strongest future. It is extremely positive and significant to have everyone working together in this way."

Volker Kuntzsch, CEO of Sanford says "we believed it was prudent to take this action in light of changing patterns of distribution of hoki. We are aware that there has been an unusual pattern of warmer water temperatures in the Tasman Sea in the last 18 months. We can't say for sure that this is causing hoki to change their behaviour, but until the science can give us firm answers, we felt that this co-operative approach to limit our fishing activity was the right thing to do."

Mark Allison, Managing Director of Independent Fisheries helped bring the various industry leaders together and says this decision is about putting sustainability first. "Co-operation is the key to a sustainable fishery and that includes working closely with MPI to support the Government's management of the hoki fishery."

Tom Birdsall also believes it is significant that so many industry leaders have agreed to take this precautionary action. "This is not the first time we have agreed to shelve an amount of quota in a deepwater fishery and it is one of the effective measures industry sets in place to complement Government controls. It is heartening to see quota owners working together like this to ensure the best outcome for the fishery."

Andrew Talley, of Talley’s Group says “adopting this precautionary approach with industry leaders demonstrates our ability to move quickly when we believe the need is there. We have supported the Promise Campaign by the wider New Zealand seafood industry. This is a demonstration of that commitment in real time.”

\*\*\*\*ENDS\*\*\*\*

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### **What This Means - Background Information on the Decision**

#### **Who is included?**

Industry leaders from major fishing companies included in this initiative are:

IFL (Independent Fisheries Limited)

Maruha

Sanford

Sealord

Talley’s

Te Ohu Kaimoana

United Fisheries

Vela Group

#### **What has been done exactly?**

The industry leaders involved have agreed not to fish 22% of their catch limit for the West Coast hoki fishery in 2018/19. This practice is referred to as shelving and this means the companies involved will simply not fish their full entitlement of hoki quota. They will also not carry forward any uncaught West Coast quota from the 2017/18 fishing year. This is a precautionary interim measure taken by industry while MPI and the scientists assess why fewer hoki were observed by fishers than expected in one of the five fishing grounds.

#### **How often is shelving done by the industry?**

Not often. It is a tool that is available to the industry to enable it to move quickly while it waits for further scientific assessments. These are due in the hoki fishery mid-next year. The industry leaders involved in this decision were motivated by the atypical patterns of fish distribution their fishers are seeing in New Zealand waters.

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