

Media release – for immediate use

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## **Sanford Supports WWF and Māui63 Initiative to Save Māui Dolphins with ‘Mission Possible’**

Sanford Limited, New Zealand’s biggest seafood company, is applauding the initiative announced today by WWF-New Zealand and MĀUI63, to use cutting edge drone technology to protect the critically endangered Māui Dolphins.

The unmanned drones and their associated AI will follow the dolphins in a way that will not disturb them, collecting real-time information about their whereabouts so that they can be left alone and also in the longer term, helping scientists, regulators and all marine users to understand their seasonal movements and behaviours, so that the right protections can be in place at all times.

Sanford has been working with WWF-New Zealand and fellow fishing company Moana on Option 5 - their own plans to protect Māui. This drone work is inspired by that but is being managed separately. Sanford CEO Volker Kuntzsch says that “while Moana and Sanford aren’t directly involved in the day to day implementation of this project, we do think this is a wonderful initiative by MAUI63 and WWF-New Zealand and we are looking at how we can support this extremely exciting work. It is a great addition to all the other measures being undertaken and is a great use of modern technology.”

Sanford’s Chief Operating Officer, Clement Chia says seeing the video of what the drones can do was mind blowing.

“It was a real ‘wow’ moment for us. We had thought the technology, enabling drones and AI to tell us where these rare dolphins are, would be years away, but it is here now. It has been tested and developed during 18 months of work by the scientists and technicians at MAUI63. Our hope is that having much more definitive information about where these dolphins are will enable us to avoid them in real time and reduce or eliminate any residual risk to the dolphins from our already limited fishing activity.”

Sanford and Moana both intend to implement a move on rule once they have this information. The details of this rule will be worked out in consultation with regulators but Mr Chia says at the heart of it is a desire to keep right out of the dolphin’s way, no matter what.

“If we are fishing and get information from the drone programme that a dolphin is near or approaching, we will leave the area immediately.”

CEO Volker Kuntzsch says trying to protect Māui dolphins is not new to Sanford.

“We have been actively using protection measures to avoid dolphins since we launched our Māui Protection Plan with Moana and WWF in 2016. Having better technology to truly understand where these animals are and what they are doing will empower us to do more. I have said for some time that the worst thing that can happen at Sanford is the death of one of our people but the second worst would be the death of a Māui dolphin – that’s how strongly we feel about this issue.”

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

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### **Sanford Ltd**

Sanford is New Zealand's oldest and largest seafood company - we have been listed on the New Zealand stock market since 1924. We are focused on sustainability and on maximising the value of the resources we gather from our oceans, enabling long term value creation from oceans teeming with life. Sanford sites can be found in eleven locations around New Zealand and we are a team of 1700 staff and sharefishers across the country. We are committed to innovation: we have a team of scientists whose mission is to find new ways to make the most of the life-enhancing properties of seafood, from anti-inflammatory supplements to skin-nurturing collagen.