

## 'King' worried about jobs, future



Fred Glasbrenner catches and cans.  
Photo: *Craig Sillitoe*

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- [Shell shocked: 'escaped' virus ruins stocks](#)

Reid Sexton  
July 29, 2007

FRED Glasbrenner loves abalone — and no wonder.

The shellfish had made him a wealthy man and turned him into a pillar of the Victorian abalone industry. His abalone licence and 17-tonne quota was worth "at least" \$6 million, and his abalone canning factory and restaurant more still.

But the virus has knocked an estimated \$2 million off his capital and it will continue to fall as the virus keeps spreading to the east.

The value of his central zone licence will be sure to plummet if the virus devastates the stocks there, as it already has in the western zone, where up to \$5 million has been slashed from the value of each licence. Licence holders "are not happy", he says.

"Everyone is very worried because they employ lots and lots of people.

"There could be thousands of people indirectly employed by this industry."

Victoria's 71 licences were each worth several million dollars and those people who bought them for \$200 in the 1960s could be considered particularly fortunate.

But, according to Mr Glasbrenner, it is not luck but hard work and a willingness to learn that has built the abalone industry into the success it is, and it would be a tragedy to see it crumble.

"This is my life. I'm not going to sell up, I will stay to the end."

## Shell shocked: 'escaped' virus ruins stocks

'King' worried about jobs, future



With waters in the south-west of the state in crisis, a diver turns to Port Phillip Bay to look for healthy stocks of abalone.  
Photo: *Mary Molloy*

### Latest related coverage

- 'King' worried about jobs, future

July 29, 2007

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**The abalone industry says it is facing almost certain ruin, and blames Government inaction for ignoring the looming disaster, Reid Sexton reports.**

AUSTRALIA'S multibillion-dollar abalone industry could face ruin — and is blaming Victorian Government inaction for allowing a deadly virus to jump from contaminated farm stocks to the world's last unspoilt wild abalone fisheries.

About 500 jobs in Victoria alone are at risk from the virus, which in less than a year has devastated key fisheries scattered along 200 kilometres of the state's south-western coast.

The herpes-like disease kills up to 95 per cent of abalone it infects. Tasmania has imposed strict biosecurity measures to try to stop it crossing Bass Strait.

The potential for devastation has prompted one government fisheries researcher to criticise his own department for ignoring the disease until it was too late.

"The abalone is being absolutely annihilated," the researcher said. "People who have dived there for 40 years have never seen anything like it."

South-eastern Australia has the world's most lucrative wild abalone fishery, and one of the last in the world where consistently high yields are common.

The Victorian abalone fishery is the most valuable commercial fishery in the state, with \$75 million in exports, mostly to Asia.

The Victorian Abalone Divers Association has called for Port Phillip Bay to be quarantined to try to contain the virus, although at least one expert says it might be too late.

Victorian Abalone Divers Association secretary Vin Gannon said Fisheries Victoria had already reduced the annual quota by 170 tonnes to about 1100 tonnes in response to the virus — costing the state millions of export dollars. As stocks die, quotas and exports will continue to be slashed to try to protect surviving abalone beds.

Mr Gannon said the State Government should have ordered the destruction of farmed abalone and halted the pumping of effluent when the virus began infecting stock in December 2005, five months before it was detected in the wild near an infected farm at Port Fairy.

"This is an incredibly serious issue," Mr Gannon said. "Fisheries and Wildlife underestimated how bad the virus was going to be, and if they put quarantine areas in, it's an admission they were wrong. They are prepared to risk the entire industry and the environment."

Mr Gannon said the long-term environmental damage of the outbreak, which ranges from Childers Cove, east of Warrnambool, to Cape Bridgewater, west of Portland, would be worse than even the huge financial impact.

Page 2 of 2

"It will potentially change the ecosystem forever," he said. "The concern is if the bottom of Bass Strait changes, it may never be receptive to abalone again. We have a virus that could travel all the way around Australia and destroy the whole abalone industry."

The industry has been reluctant to discuss the virus, which poses no threat to humans, because of fears it will damage its reputation overseas. But the growing threat that the industry may be destroyed after years of sustainable fishing saved it from poachers has prompted concerned groups to speak out. The Victorian National Parks Association has called for the Government to act urgently to combat the disease, which has ravaged at least one marine park.

Harry Peters, the executive officer of the Western Abalone Divers Association — hit hard by the virus — said the disease had stripped \$70 million off the value of western zone diving licences alone.

He is demanding an independent inquiry to investigate why the Department of Primary Industries, which oversees Fisheries Victoria, did not order the destruction of farm stock when the virus was detected.

"This is the worst environmental disaster ever seen in the south-west of Victoria," he said.

Dr Peter Appleford, executive director of Fisheries Victoria, last night denied the Government had ignored the threat by not destroying stock at the farms when it was first detected.

He said the virus may already have been present in wild Victorian abalone before the farming outbreak and environmental factors such as changing water temperature might make them more vulnerable.

He said the virus was a "major concern" but would not speculate on whether it could spread interstate.

But other experts reject the claim the virus is native to Victoria and poses no danger.

In a report commissioned by the Western Abalone Divers Association, a senior aquatic pathologist said it was highly probable the disease was introduced by farming.

Judith Handler, of the Tasmanian Department of Industry and Water, agrees that allowing the disease to escape into the wild could have a devastating impact.

Rob Day, a Melbourne University abalone expert, said farms were the only places the virus could have originated.

"It has now infected most of the reefs along that stretch of coast," he said. "The fact that the abalone have been dying in fairly high percentages when they're struck by this disease outbreak suggests that it's not something they have seen before. It's clear very few of them have resistance to it."

Jeremy Prince, who works for the Western Abalone Divers Association, said: "The genie is out of the bottle.

"There are things you can try to slow its spread, but it's up to nature and is fanned by the processes of man."

## **Rare treasure**

**ABALONE is Victoria's most valuable commercial fishery, with annual exports worth around \$75 million of the national total of \$200 million before the virus struck. The shellfish, scarce elsewhere in the world, is sold mostly to Asian countries where it is considered a delicacy.**

**Wild stock in South Africa, Asia and Mexico have collapsed due to over-fishing — while a deadly bacterium devastated the Californian industry.**

**There are 71 abalone licences in Victoria, each giving the holder the right to harvest set quotas.**

**Before the viral outbreak licences and quotas combined were worth upwards of \$6 million. Those tied to areas affected by the disease are now worth much less and falling.**

<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/>

**Fairfax Digital**



With waters in the south-west of the state in crisis, a diver turns to Port Phillip Bay to look for healthy stocks of abalone.  
Photo: *Mary Molloy*

## Shell shocked: 'escaped' virus devastates abalone stocks

July 29, 2007

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About 500 jobs in Victoria alone are at risk from the virus, which in less than a year has devastated key fisheries scattered along 200 kilometres of the state's south-western coast.

The herpes-like disease kills up to 95 per cent of abalone it infects. Tasmania has imposed strict biosecurity measures to try to stop it crossing Bass Strait.

The potential for devastation has prompted one government fisheries researcher to criticise his own department for ignoring the disease until it was too late.

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Mr Gannon said the State Government should have ordered the destruction of farmed abalone and halted the pumping of effluent when the virus began infecting stock in December 2005, five months before it was detected in the wild near an infected farm at Port Fairy.

"This is an incredibly serious issue," Mr Gannon said. "Fisheries and Wildlife underestimated how bad the virus was going to be, and if they put quarantine areas in, it's an admission they were wrong. They are prepared to risk the entire industry and the environment."

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## Herpes-like virus contaminates fisheries

July 29, 2007 - 6:04AM

Australia's multi-billion dollar abalone industry could face ruin after a deadly herpes-like virus has contaminated key fisheries along Victoria's south-western coast.

The abalone industry is blaming the Victorian government's inaction, as the virus has devastated fisheries scattered along 200km of coastal waters within less than a year, Fairfax newspapers said.

About 500 jobs in Victoria are at risk as 95 per cent of abalone could be infected.

Biosecurity measures have been enforced by Tasmanian authorities to stop the virus crossing Bass Strait.

A government fisheries researcher has criticised his own department, saying the damage has been done and the problem has been ignored.

"The abalone is being absolutely annihilated," the researcher said. "People who have dived there for 40 years have never seen anything like it."

South-eastern Australia has the world's most lucrative wild abalone fishery.

It is common for abalone divers to return high yields of the expensive delicacy that earns \$75 million in exports, mostly to the high-demand Asian market.

Victorian Abalone Divers Association secretary Vin Gannon said Fisheries Victoria reduced the annual quota by 170 tonnes to about 1100 tonnes in response to the virus.

Mr Gannon said the state government should have ordered the destruction of farmed abalone after it was first detected near a devastated farm in Port Fairy.

This is an incredibly serious issue," Mr Gannon said. "Fisheries and Wildlife underestimated how bad the virus was going to be, and if they put quarantine areas in, it's an admission they were wrong. They are prepared to risk the entire industry and the environment."

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## **An issue to put on the new premier's plate: abalone**

July 29, 2007

THE first Australians ate abalone but for more than 150 years of white settlement, fishermen dismissed the shellfish as bait. It is only in living memory that the potential of south-eastern Australia's wild abalone fishery began to be tapped. As Asian markets looked to Australia when their overfished (and diseased) stocks were exhausted, abalone licences that had cost \$2 in the 1960s were suddenly worth \$200, then tens of thousands. By the 1990s, licences were trading for millions of dollars.

Then part of the Victorian abalone fishery collapsed this year after being invaded by a silent enemy — a herpes-like virus that turns beds of healthy molluscs into an underwater graveyard of empty shells and rotting meat. In months, the outbreak has infected most of the fisheries along Victoria's west coast. The fear is that it will spread to Port Phillip Bay, then eastwards. Worse, if it jumps Bass Strait, it threatens to wipe out the Tasmanian abalone fishery which, with New Zealand's, comprises the last great wild stocks on Earth. Tasmanian authorities have acted swiftly to contain what threatens to be one of the worst catastrophes to hit Australia's primary industries. Strangely, however, the Victorian Government seems to have ducked its responsibility to the industry and to nature by refusing to act in time to prevent the deadly virus spreading.

The overwhelming likelihood is that the virus — perhaps from contaminated fish food — was harboured on abalone farms and spread uncontrolled to the wild when effluent was carelessly pumped into the open sea. Any semblance of routine quarantine precautions used on land to beat livestock epidemics — anthrax, foot and mouth, avian flu — would probably have shielded the nation's \$2 billion abalone industry from the threat. So why was nothing done? The answer to that, say those worst affected and some experts willing to challenge the official line, is that Victoria's Department of Primary Industries favours aquaculture and therefore turned a blind eye to looming catastrophe. If true, that is a damning indictment. Welcome, premier Brumby, to your first challenge.

**THE STANDARD**

## **Virus hunt halted**

SARAH SCOPELIANOS

July 17, 2007

ABALONE divers feel abandoned by the Department of Primary Industries as a deadly virus continues to ravage shellfish along Victoria's south-west coast.

The department stopped checking the coast for the herpes-like disease in March, but yesterday confirmed a representative would attend a meeting of the Victorian Abalone Divers' Association this month.

A spokesperson said a Fisheries Victoria representative would attend the July 23 meeting in Hastings and no further updates were available on the virus.

The ganglioneuritis virus led central zone licence holders to voluntarily close the area between Warrnambool and Port Campbell in February, foregoing a \$2 million harvest in an attempt to hold the disease.

The effort has been fruitless with the disease found at Childers Cove. In an attempt to stop humans transferring the virus, the group had proposed closing the boat ramps between Warrnambool and Port Campbell - before the virus was found within the zone.

Despite industry's commitment to the ban, the department denied the association's request to extend it to recreational divers.

Divers' association chief executive Vin Gannon said divers' concerns were increasing and he forecast a ``bleak future".



## **Abalone virus barriers likely to become permanent**

Posted Wed Jul 25, 2007 8:08pm AEST

New bio-security measures being introduced to protect Tasmania's abalone stocks from a herpes-like virus that's been killing abalone in Victoria are likely to become permanent.

The new rules will target recreational divers and abalone processing operations to help keep the ganglioneuritis virus out of Tasmanian waters.

The chief executive of the Tasmanian Abalone Council, Dean Lisson, says it is part of a wider review aimed at protecting the state's fishing industries.

"What we've done at the moment, the steps we've taken up to now, are interim measures of which most of them will probably become permanent as part of this bio-security review," Mr Lisson said.



**David Llewellyn, MHA**

Minister for Primary Industries and Water

Tuesday, 24 July 2007





Chilean salmon farmers face a growing sea lice problem

Photo by Max Alarcon

The Chilean government has acknowledged for the first time that sea lice – parasitic crustaceans that affect both wild and farmed fish – are causing serious problems for the country’s lucrative farmed salmon industry.

Also known as *Caligus*, sea lice attach themselves to the bodies of fish, causing infection-prone lesions that leave the host fish vulnerable to a host of potentially fatal illnesses. Though they also affect wild fish, sea lice are particularly attracted to fish farms, which house huge numbers of captive and concentrated host fish.

In a July 5 letter addressed to the Washington, D.C.-based organization Pure Salmon Campaign, Ines Montalva Rodriguez, director of Chile’s National Fishing Service (SERNAPESCA), admitted that Chile has experienced an “outbreak” of the parasites. She also outlined a series of actions authorities are taking to contain the problem.

The measures include monitoring the transport of fish from *Caligus*-infested zones to *Caligus*-free zones, dousing salmon pens with hydrogen peroxide, and conducting workshops and roundtables to educate salmon farmers about the problem.

On June 8, the letter went on to explain, SERNAPESCA formally launched its so-called Surveillance and Control Program for *Caligus*. “The Surveillance Program looks to decrease the impacts of *Caligus* on salmon aquaculture and considers – as a first step – collecting, recording and analysing data about the disease. (The Program) will also define all necessary actions in order to control this parasite problem,” wrote Montalva.

According to Pure Salmon Campaign, an organization that lobbies worldwide for healthy and environmentally-responsible salmon production practices, Montalva’s letter marks the first time a Chilean government official has officially recognized the extent of the outbreak.

This is not, however, the first time the sea lice problem has attracted public attention. In fact, for several months now information about a possible *Caligus* “plague” had been bubbling to the surface through media reports and vague references by some salmon companies themselves.

In early April the daily *La Nación* published an alarming exposé entitled “The Plague of Salmon,” warning that Region X – where some 84 percent of the nation’s US\$2.2 billion salmon industry is concentrated – is on its way to becoming “more lice-infested than a homeless shelter.”

Sea lice, the article explained, leave fish with ugly lesions that lessen the salmon’s market value, stunt their growth and leave the host fish prone to a variety of sometimes fatal illnesses. As Dr. Felipe Cabello of the New York Medical College wrote in an e-mail to the *Patagonia Times*, “Sea lice infestation may increase

fish susceptibility to bacterial infections by at least two mechanisms; fish stress and by allowing bacteria to penetrate the fish skin through ulcerations.”

Rising average water temperatures, the La Nación article went on to say, have increased the life cycle of the sea lice. At the same time, the small crustaceans are likely developing immunities to the anti-parasite chemicals salmon farmers use in abundance.

Even before the La Nación article hit newsstands, other evidence of a growing problem had begun filtering to the public bit by bit. Earlier in the year, Canadian health authorities issued three import alerts after detecting unallowable amounts of the sea lice chemicals Emamectin/Ivermectin in Chilean-grown fish.

Clues of an expanding sea lice outbreak also came from some salmon companies themselves. In its 2006 fourth quarter report (released this past February) the company Cermaq (Mainstream) wrote, “there have been further negative impacts from sea lice and other fish health issues. We expect these challenges to fish husbandry to have an adverse affect on production in Chile in 2007.” Marine Harvest, in its final 2006 report (released in March), made a similar reference, noting vaguely that “the biological situation in Chile is currently a challenge.”

The question now, especially with SERNAPESCA having finally acknowledged the Caligus outbreak, is what to do about it.

So far the industry appears to have relied on two basic strategies: dump, as in apply more anti-parasite and antibiotic chemicals; and dash, as in collect fish in affected zones and move them south to cleaner, cooler waters. Both responses, say critics, are problematic. Moving the fish simply spreads the plague further south, while dumping more chemicals on the problem is not only a temporary solution, but a potentially dangerous one as well, they argue.

“Others and myself have tried to determine the amounts of antibiotics used and assess the potential risks of this use for human and animal health,” according to Dr. Cabello, a specialist in microbiology and immunology. “This type of research has been carried out extensively for many years in countries such as Norway, Denmark, the U.K. and Canada. This research has showed repeatedly that the use of antibiotics in aquaculture, and in animal husbandry in general, has risks for humans and animal health.”

SERNAPESCA’s suggestions – for example, monitoring fish before transporting them – certainly represent a next step. But according to Pure Salmon Campaign, the government measures do not go far enough toward ensuring a healthy future for both the industry and Chile’s environment.

“The government of Chile needs to take a long view,” Kavanagh explained in a recent press release. “The sea lice problem in Chile has been exacerbated by mismanagement and overuse of chemicals leading to resistance in sea lice. Dumping more chemicals into Chile’s beautiful fjords would only be a recipe for further degradation.”

“If the Chilean government is serious about combating the problem of sea lice outbreaks,” she went on to say, “ultimately it needs to move to closed systems that separate the farmed fish from the natural environment.”

By Benjamin Witte (benwitteATsantiagotimes.cl)

## TVB-Drama: Heart of Greed



**Language:** Chinese (Cantonese)

**Subtitle:** Chinese (Hard-subbed)

**Episodes:** 40

**Release Date:** 2007

**Genre:** Modern Drama

### Synopsis:

This series revolves around an abalone business and the family who manages it. This involves many family problem while people are trying to solve the problem without making any trouble. But when they keep on doing this the problem keeps on getting worse.

### Starring:

- Moses Chan as Tong Chi On
- Linda Chung as Sheung Zhoi Sum
- Ha Yu as Tong Yan Kai
- Lee Sze Kei as Ling Hau
- Susanna Kwan as Frances Wong Sau Kam
- Bosco Wong as Gilbert Tong Chi Yat
- Chris Lai as Tong Chi Foon
- Raymond Lam as Alfred Ching Leung
- Tavia Yeung as Jackie Cheuk Man Lai
- Michelle Yim as Ling Lei
- Louis Yuen as Ling Bo
- Yoyo Mung as Sui Ming Ha

- Fala Chen as Tong Chi Yan
- Lei Seng Cheung as Sheung Joi Duk
- Carrie Lam as Cho Bang

**Rating:** Your turn to rate! ^\_^

**Personal**

**Note:**

Haven't seen this yet to comment but the drama seems to have garnered very good reviews/rating.

**Watch the Preview:**

**You can download the episodes from**

<http://chinkymovies.blogspot.com/2007/07/tvb-drama-heart-of-greed.html>

**Or you can view a couple of the shorts from U tube on the below links**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kz\\_AD-aDch0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kz_AD-aDch0)

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xrKdnIA\\_HKM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xrKdnIA_HKM)



Friday, July 13 2007 @ 09:33 AM BST

Agriculture

## 13 - **National Abalone Breeding Program to address shortage in world market**

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap on Friday launched here a five-year program spearheaded by the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) and Bureau of Fisheries and Agriculture Research (BFAR) to address shortage of abalone in the world market.

At present, there is an estimated shortage of about 4,000-6,000 metric tons (MT) of abalone in the world market.

Yap said the P15 million investment of DA-BFAR in the National Abalone Breeding and

Culture Program, "is well worth it," considering that in the first year alone, the six abalone hatcheries and six grow-out farms to be built under this initiative are projected to produce more than 100,000 kilos, which is worth P36 million in the local market and P56.5 million if exported.

He said the DA-BFAR and SEAFDEC is looking at six possible sites for abalone hatcheries and grow-out sea cage farmstwo each in Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao. These are in Claveria in Cagayan Valley and Sorsogon for Luzon; Bohol and Cebu for the Visayas; and Surigao and Camiguin Island in Mindanao.

"With this national program in place, we hope to maintain our niche as one of the exporters of abalone in the Asia-Pacific region," Yap said during the 34th anniversary celebration of the SEAFDEC Aquaculture Department held in Tigbauan, Iloilo.

"With this five-year program, we are seeding and nurturing the country's fledgling abalone industry," he added.

The tropical abalone is one of the most commercially important commodities for domestic and international market. Hong Kong is regarded as the biggest exporter of this commodity in Asia, contributing about 30 percent share of frozen abalone.

In the last decade, the Philippines exported about P129-million worth of various abalone products.

Yap said the Philippines is "looking forward to conquering the abalone export market in succeeding years," with the implementation of the program, pointing out that the current world market demand for this fish requires an additional four million to six million kilos annually.

He said that with the rising demand, particularly in China, abalone prices are expected to rise in the global market.

The program is expected to provide tropical breeding and culture technology in suitable provinces in the country, introduce and demonstrate abalone farming as an alternative means of livelihood for coastal communities, and increase production and export earnings from the tropical abalone.

Under the program, BFAR will provide the funds for the construction and operation of abalone culture and breeding sites.

SEAFDEC, on the other hand, will provide the necessary technical expertise for the implementation of the program, among other things.

The DA Chief expressed confidence the abalone breeding and culture program would succeed in transforming the once-fledgling abalone industry in the Philippines into a

major growth driver for the fisheries sector.

Yap said that as the premier aquaculture research and development institution in Southeast Asia, SEAFDEC has made significant contributions in transforming the Philippines into one of the world's top producers of shrimps, seaweeds, bangus and tilapia, among other aquaculture and marine products.

"We are indeed privileged to have a staunch ally in the SEAFDEC-Aquaculture Department through more than three decades now in our continuing efforts to sustain the development and modernization of the Philippine fishery and aquaculture industry," he said.

"That we have breached the four-million ton fishery production in recent years is in part due to the massive adoption and commercialization of several SEAFDEC technologies, particularly in giant tiger shrimp, milkfish, high-value marine fishes, tilapia and other freshwater fishes and prawn, seaweeds, and mudcrabs," Yap noted.

He assured the SEAFDEC that the DA will continue to support the institution in developing and disseminating technologies for the benefit of stakeholders, most particularly small fishers and their families.

Yap also commended the SEAFDEC for implementing its ongoing initiatives to boost fisheries and aquaculture production, including the "ABOT (Agree-Build-Operate-Transfer) Aqua Negosyo," which provides technical aid to interested entrepreneurs who want to venture into aquaculture.

Another SEAFDEC project, he said, is the Institutional Capacity Development for Sustainable Agriculture and Resource Enhancement, which trains local government units, non-government organizations (NGOs), fishermen's groups, and even fishery schools and colleges on various aquaculture technologies, from site assessment, project establishment, fish stocking to harvest.

Yap lauded SEAFDEC-Aquaculture Department chief Joebert Toledo for carrying out several projects in tandem with local government units (LGUs) and state universities, such as the culture of grouper and mudfish with the Capiz State University; a freshwater hatchery with the Polytechnic College of Antique; cage culture of sea bass with the Mag-aba Cooperative in Pandan, Antique; and the culture of sea bass in Hamtik, Antique.

Last year, the fishery sector grew by six percent to 4.4 million metric tons, which was valued at P163.4 billion. The aquaculture sub-sector contributed the biggest share at 47.5 percent in terms of volume.

For the first quarter of 2007, the entire fishery sector expanded by 8.6 percent, with its value at current prices placed at P43.7 billion. (PNA)

-- This email has been scanned by the Balita server.



Sat 14 Jul 2007

## **Concern over threat to wild salmon as 30,000 farmed fish escape cages**

**JOHN ROSS**

MORE than 30,000 fish have escaped from Scottish farms in the first four months of this year - sparking fears they could harm wild stocks.

The Scottish Salmon Producers' Organisation (SSPO), which represents 95 per cent of the country's farmed salmon production, has now started publishing details online of known "breaches of containment".

It has revealed that 8,213 salmon were lost from a farm in Shetland and 18,500 fish escaped from containments net in Scotasay, off Harris, and the Scottish Executive yesterday confirmed another escape, of 4,000 fish in Shetland on 3 March, bringing the total until April to 30,713.

Conservationists and wild-fish interests say farmed fish can carry disease and affect the genes of wild species if they reproduce.

Roger Brooks, chairman of the Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland, described the industry's reporting move as "laudable". But he claimed the true figure is "many times" higher than the one being made public.

Mr Brooks said: "If they can get away with it they don't tell anybody about escapes.

"If all the fish farmers together say 'it wasnae me', proving it is very difficult.

"In an average year there are ten escaped salmon in the sea for every wild fish returning to Scotland. That is appalling.

"They are contaminating the countryside, their genetics are mucking up wild fish when they cross breed and they are just a pest."

Scottish Executive figures show that between 2002 - when statutory reporting began - and 2006, the number of escapees totals 1.58 million.

However, annual figures have dropped from 312,655 to 155,653 over that period.

Sid Patten, SSPO chief executive, said: "There is a lot of misinformation. We have nothing to hide. There is a certain line taken by certain environmentalists who should know better that our fish farmers are standing on pens throwing fish into the sea and it's ludicrous.

"We are investing millions in improving containment all the time. But it's a risky business which is subject to the weather and predators such as seals."

Mr Patten added "the jury is still out" on whether farmed fish harm wild stocks

"Farmed fish generally will not survive for any length of time [in the wild], especially if they are small," he said.

A Scottish Executive spokeswoman said: "Available scientific evidence shows that the interbreeding of escaped farm salmon with native salmon can have a negative impact on wild stocks. However, the full extent of the actual problem is unknown and difficult to establish with available methods and existing data."

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### **The Ones That Get Away**

AS WELL as representing a loss of assets for fish-farmers, escapes raise concerns for conservation and wild-fish interest.

Escaped fish may represent a disease hazard, occupy habitats of wild fish and have the potential to interbreed with wild fish, affecting their genes.

To address the concerns, the Scottish Executive set up a working group which included fish-farmers and wild-fishery groups. It concluded there will always be some circumstances which could result in escapes, that recapture efforts would have limited effect and that the main focus should be on containment.

The Executive now requires containment and contingency plans for each site in support of all fish-farm applications.

Since 2002, it has been compulsory to report escapes.

The Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Bill, passed this year, also brought in powers aimed at eradicating bad practice by using a code of practice.

It puts a duty on fish-farmers to collect, retain and make available for inspection information relating to the containment of fish. It also gives powers to inspectors to check whether fish have escaped from a farm and to investigate the risk of potential escapes.

Enforcement action can be taken against farms that do not have satisfactory measures in place to contain their fish.

### **Related topic**

## **THE BUSINESS TIMES**

Published July 9, 2007

TR Networks to buy abalone firm

It'll acquire China's abalone producer Oceanus in all share deal worth \$270m

By SIOW LI SEN

FROM Pierre Balmain to abalones. Singapore's latest reverse takeover proposal may see TR Networks, which sells French fashion, expand into the abalone business after it acquires Oceanus Bio-Tech Holdings in an all share deal worth \$270 million.

As in recent reverse takeovers, this transaction involves a profit guarantee from the seller. If Oceanus fails to meet the minimum profit, payment shares will be returned to TR Networks and may be cancelled, the company said yesterday in a statement to the Singapore Exchange.

TR Networks' wholly owned subsidiary, Three Rifles International, is well known for its local men's shirts. It also makes and sells Pierre Balmain ready-to-wear men's business wear, men's fashion wear and men's casual/sports/jeans wear.

Oceanus is one of the largest producers of high grade Japanese sub-species abalone in China, if not Asia, TR Networks said.

This is its second attempt to list in Singapore. Oceanus scrapped an initial public offering in December 2005 after its fish tanks were wrecked by one of the worst snow storms to hit Shandong province.

TR Networks yesterday said it has entered into an agreement to take over Oceanus from a consortium, which owns 73.9 per cent of the seafood production company located in China's Shandong and Fujian provinces.

The consortium comprises Oceanus' controlling shareholder Best Global Enterprises, as well as Napolite International Ltd, Sinostar Holdings and Dr Ng Cher Yew.

The terms of the reverse takeover say that TR Networks will acquire the entire issued and paid-up capital of Oceanus, expected to amount to just over 559 million shares, by issuing 1.35 billion new shares in the company at the issue price of 20 cents for each share, amounting to \$270 million. This is pegged to the exchange rate of S\$1 to five renminbi.

The price is based on the valuation of nine times the projected net profit after tax of Oceanus for the year ending Dec 31, 2007.

The 1.35 billion shares will constitute 92.15 per cent of the enlarged capital of TR Networks.

Oceanus, incorporated in Singapore, is a marine company specialist focusing on large-scale, land-based industrialised production and sale of expensive live seafood, said TR Networks.

Oceanus is the holding company of a wholly-owned operating unit in China, Weihai Nanyang Biologic Technology Co Ltd.

The seafood company has more than 10 years of track record in the research and development and production of seafood products, particularly abalone, halibut and turbot. Abalone, the most expensive seafood delicacy, currently makes up about 80 per cent of Oceanus's business, TR Networks said.

Oceanus is aiming to become an intergrated provider in the next few years by extending its operations into downstream processing activities, such as developing and producing frozen, canned and dried premium seafood products.

The RTO is subject to shareholders' approval. TR Networks said it will also be seeking a waiver from the Securities Industry Council from having to make a general offer.