

# Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries

Aquaculture policy

Policy relating to the transshipment of  
oysters into Queensland waters

FAMOP006

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## 1.0 Title

This Policy is to be referred to as “The Policy relating to the Transshipment of Oysters into Queensland Waters”.

## 2.0 Effective date

The policy is effective from 20 May 2003.

## 3.0 Introduction

Queensland has, for some time, relied on the transshipment of seed stock from interstate for grow-out in Queensland waters. Presently, all seed stock imported into Queensland waters originate from New South Wales. Some spat is still collected by farmers from Queensland waters but the amount is small compared to that of the spat sourced from New South Wales.

Recent pollution problems in New South Wales have highlighted the need for Queensland growers sourcing spat to be ‘buyer beware’. The majority of oyster growing areas in New South Wales are currently unclassified. Licensing conditions are regularly being amended to address the management issues associated with the transshipment of stock between the two States.

Because an oyster is considered spat up to the age of 12 months, the size can vary considerably. Generally the stock is purchased while in a juvenile stage and then placed into Queensland waters for grow-out to a commercial size.

Oyster shellstock may also be moved from New South Wales to Queensland for the purposes of relaying. Relaying allows oysters to be moved from restricted and conditional restricted areas to approved and or conditional approved areas for natural biological cleansing using the ambient environment as a treatment system. Stringent controls are required to ensure that relay procedures are adequate to protect public health. Oysters are only permitted to be moved from the restricted or conditionally restricted growing areas whilst they are in the open status. Oysters may also be relayed from conditionally approved areas whilst they are closed, subject to certain conditions. Relayed oysters must be held in the approved growing area for sufficient time and in adequate conditions to allow natural depuration to occur. The minimum period for relaying as stipulated in the ASQAP Operations Manual is 14 days. Relaying is not appropriate when oysters are known to be contaminated with deleterious substances that would not be effectively purged from the oyster during the purification process.

Ongrowing is the process whereby oysters are moved from an unclassified area to an approved classified area for a sufficient period to permit their development as a marketable product. The minimum period for ongrowing as stipulated in the ASQAP Operations Manual is 60 days.

Some spat when purchased from New South Wales are large enough to sell directly as ‘bottlers’ without ever being placed into Queensland waters. This is clearly not an

accepted practice as any contaminated stock bypasses the relaying procedure that is designed to reduce the risk of contamination.

Safe Food, New South Wales, who administer the shellfish quality assurance program has legislated certain requirements to control aspects of interstate movement. This includes no moving of stock from areas that are closed due to unacceptable rainfall levels and/or bacterial levels. Restrictions are also in place to reduce the importation into Queensland of the Pacific oyster, *Crassostrea gigas*. Queensland licence conditions prohibit the importation of this species into Queensland to reduce the threat of this species becoming a pest. Licence conditions also prohibit oysters being brought into Queensland on sticks as this increases the risk of inadvertently importing Pacific oysters and other pests.

This Policy is the requirements for the transshipment of oysters from interstate into Queensland waters only. The relaying of oysters within Queensland waters is considered in the "Policy Relating to the Relaying of Oysters within Queensland".

#### **4.0 Policy and Objectives**

*Objective: To ensure that interstate oyster movements minimise the potential impacts of food safety and disease translocation.*

This Policy will allow juvenile and or the relaying of oysters to continue and will reduce public health issues and the risk of disease translocation by increasing the time stock are kept in Queensland waters and ensuring that the oysters are only sourced from pollution free areas.

#### **5.0 Application of the policy**

This policy applies to holders of aquaculture licences for oysters in Queensland and is to read and applied in conjunction with the Fisheries Act 1994, its associated Regulations, all other relevant policies of the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) and the National Competition Policy.

#### **6.0 Policy considerations**

The main purpose of the Fisheries Act 1994 (the Act) (Section 3) is to provide for the use, conservation and enhancement of the community's fisheries resources and fish habitats in a way that seeks to:

- a. apply and balance the principles of ecological sustainable development;
- and
- b. promote ecological sustainable development.

In balancing the principles, each principle is to be given the relative emphasis appropriate in the circumstances (Section 3(2)).

The objective of this Policy is to minimise potential impacts of food safety and disease translocation. There is a need to ensure the aquaculture oyster industry enjoys a reputation as producing a safe food for human consumption. This will improve the total quality of life, both now and in the future. This is consistent with the following principles of ecological sustainable development:

- a. considering the need to develop a strong, growing and diversified economy that can enhance the capacity for environmental protections;
- b. enhancing individual and community wellbeing through economic development that safeguards the wellbeing of future generations; and
- c. in making decisions, effectively integrating fairness and short and long-term economic, environmental impacts of actions and policies.

Section 61 of the Fisheries Act 1994 (the Act) allows the chief executive, or a person holding the requisite delegation, to impose any “reasonable and relevant” condition on an authority. Such a condition can have the effect of preventing the authority taking fisheries resources or using apparatus that could otherwise be lawfully used under it (Section 61(7)).

The relaying and ongrowing procedures outlined in this document are consistent with the requirements of the ASQAP. The ASQAP was established on the National Shellfish Sanitation Program of the United States of America. ASQAP provides the administrative and procedural framework, in the form of the ASQAP Operations Manual, as guidelines as these apply under Federal and State legislation for the control of shellfish growing areas, harvesting, processing and the distribution of shellfish. The Manual contains classification criteria that must be applied to each sample site within the oyster growing areas. These classifications, Approved, Conditionally Approved, Restricted, Conditionally Restricted and Prohibited, all reflect the sanitary status of the growing area to which the classification is assigned.

The ASQAP Operations Manual’s main objective is to protect the health of shellfish consumers through the administration and application of procedures that:

- monitor and determine the risk of shellfish contamination by pathogenic bacteria and viruses, biotoxins and chemicals that may impact the growing areas;
- impose appropriate harvesting controls; and
- ensure protection from contamination after harvesting prior to the retail chain.

## 7.0 Glossary

In this policy statement the terms listed below have the following meaning:

### **“Approved harvesting area”**

A shellfish harvesting area classified as approved by the SSCA for harvesting or collecting shellfish for direct marketing.

### **“Closed Status”**

Means a condition that may apply to a harvesting area where the commercial harvesting of shellfish is temporarily prohibited. A closed status may be placed on any of four classified harvesting area categories: approved, conditional approved, restricted or conditional restricted.

### **“Conditional approved area”**

The classification of a shellfish harvesting area which meets approved harvesting area criteria as determined by the SSCA, for a predictable period. The period depends upon established performance standards specified in a management plan. A conditional approved area is closed by the SSCA when the area does not meet the approved harvesting area criteria.

### **“Conditional restricted area”**

The classification of a shellfish harvesting area that meets restricted area criteria as determined by the SSCA, for a predictable period. The period depends upon acceptable performance standards specified in a management plan. A conditional restricted harvesting area is closed by the SSCA when the area does not meet the restricted harvesting area criteria.

### **“Ongrowing”**

The process whereby shellfish are translocated to a classified area for a sufficient period to permit their development as a marketable product. The period shall not be less than 60 days.

### **“Open status”**

In respect to a conditional approved harvesting area, means that shellfish may be harvested for direct marketing when the shellfish are safe for human consumption as determined by the SSCA.

In respect to a conditional restricted harvesting area, means that shellfish may be harvested for depuration or relaying when the shellfish growing waters and the shellfish meet harvesting criteria as determined by the SSCA.

### **"Relaying"**

The transfer of shellfish from restricted areas, conditional restricted areas in the open status, or conditional approved areas in the closed status to approved or conditional approved areas in the open status for the reduction of pathogens as measured by the faecal coliform indicator group or poisonous or deleterious substances that may be present, by using the ambient environment as a treatment process.

### **“Restricted area”**

A growing area classified by the SSCA as an area from which shellfish may be harvested only with the approval of the SSCA and then subjected to an effective purification process such as relaying or depuration.

### **“Shellfish"**

All edible species of molluscan bivalves

### **"Shellstock"**

Live shellfish in the shell.

### **“State Shellfish Control Authority (SSCA)”**

The State government agency or agencies having the legal authority to classify shellfish growing areas, control the relaying, harvesting, depuration and handling of shellstock and to seize shellstock that is contaminated or has been harvested from prohibited or closed shellfish harvesting areas.

### **“Transshipment”**

The movement of oysters from interstate and placed into Queensland waters.

## 8.0 The policy

The chief executive will ordinarily impose the following conditions for oyster aquaculture licences for the importation of oysters:

- OI 1** The holder is only authorised to bring the species rock oyster (*Saccostrea glomerata*) into Queensland from other Australian states.
- OI 2** Oysters must not be brought into Queensland on sticks.
- OI 3** The holder must not bring into Queensland any oysters from growing areas classified as **Restricted** or **Conditionally Restricted** in the **closed status** as classified under the Australian Shellfish Quality Assurance Program.
- OI 4** Where rock oysters *Saccostrea glomerata* are brought into Queensland from interstate with the intention of placing them into Queensland waters, the holder must:
  - a) notify the Aquaculture Policy Section, (DPI&F) in writing a minimum of two (2) days prior to EACH shipment of any oysters, and make such oysters available for inspection before placement into Queensland waters if required by DPI&F; and
  - b) ensure that each oyster consignment is accompanied by the relevant state's documentation and approvals e.g. "Permit to Relocate Oysters taken from NSW waters" issued by NSW Fisheries and
  - c) forward the relevant documentation to the Aquaculture Policy Section, DPI&F within seven (7) days of import of the oysters into Queensland; and
  - d) hold each consignment of oysters from areas classified as **Restricted** or **Conditionally Restricted** in the **open status**, or **Conditionally Approved** in the **closed status** for a minimum period of fourteen (14) consecutive days in an **Approved** or **Conditionally Approved** oyster area in the **open status** prior to harvesting for human consumption: and
  - e) hold each consignment of oysters from areas which are **unclassified** for a minimum period of sixty (60) consecutive days prior to harvesting for human consumption. The last fourteen (14) consecutive days must be in an **Approved** or **Conditionally Approved** oyster area in the **open status**.
  - f) place oysters on a rack or longline whose sole function is the holding of oysters sourced from other states. This rack or longline must be readily identifiable from others and separated from other racks or longlines; and
  - g) keep each consignment of oysters separate and identifiable; and
  - h) individually label each consignment of oysters with an identifying tag; and
  - j) maintain markings during the entire duration that the oysters are on the oyster area.
- OI 5** The holder must:
  - a) maintain written records which details:
    - i. where the stock was sourced from; and
    - ii. number of bags placed; and

- iii. date of placement; and
  - iv. exact position on the approved aquaculture area; and
  - v. method of holding oysters; and
  - vi. identification tag of each consignment of oysters; and
  - vii. date of harvest and destination of oysters on harvest; and
- b) maintain these records for an additional calendar year from the date of harvest.
  - c) make these records available for inspection if required by DPI&F.

## **9.0 Policy amendments**

This policy document was revised in January 2005 solely to reflect the departmental name change to the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries.