

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN FISHING INDUSTRY

Statement by Minister for Fisheries

HON KEN BASTON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Fisheries) [3.10 pm]: Last Friday was World Fisheries Day, an annual celebration of the critical importance of sustainable global fisheries and healthy ocean ecosystems, as well as a time to recognise and acknowledge everyone associated with the fishing industry. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, fishers and aquaculturalists, and those supplying services and goods to them, assure the livelihoods and wellbeing of more than half a billion people, which is close to eight per cent of the world's population.

Here in Western Australia our fishing industry is relatively small compared with some of the massive wild capture and aquaculture operations in other parts of the world. However, we are nevertheless a world leader in the way we manage the sustainable use of our fisheries for the commercial and recreational sectors. Indeed, a Department of Fisheries report released this year revealed that 97 per cent of the state's fish stocks that support commercial and recreational fisheries are sustainable. Furthermore, comprehensive rebuilding strategies are in place for the remaining stocks, which have been largely impacted by environmental factors. It is acknowledged internationally that we have worked hard to develop one of the very best sustainably managed fishing industries in the world. In 2000 our western rock lobster fishery was the very first fishery in the world to be certified as ecologically sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council. Many of our other main fisheries are now on the way to MSC certification as well.

Even in the face of tough international trade barriers, the Western Australian fishing industry has continued to perform well, exporting more than half a billion dollars of fisheries products in 2013–14. Now, with a free trade agreement with China having been announced just last week, our exporters will see tariffs on seafood entering China reduced to zero within four years of the agreement coming into force. Therefore, not only were we able to celebrate World Fisheries Day last week, we were also able to celebrate the fact that WA's exporters will now be able to compete on a more level playing field with countries like New Zealand, which already has an FTA with China. When the Australian FTA with China is in place, we will have a distinct trade advantage over some of the world's biggest seafood producers, such as the US and Canada, when selling our seafood to China.

We are also at an advantage here because we are very innovative in the way we have been developing the industry. Just last Friday I was pleased to see at first hand the great work being done by a WA aquaculture company, Ocean Grown Abalone, in Augusta. The farming methods developed by OGA are groundbreaking and considered a world first. Abalone is a highly sought-after product, and this project will lead to more jobs in the Augusta region and more export dollars for the WA economy. I therefore wish to commend and congratulate everyone associated with the fishing industry, including the hardworking commercial fishers and aquaculture producers who bring in the fisheries products; all the people associated with processing and exporting the products; those in the many support industries; and, of course, the Department of Fisheries and the state's peak industry bodies, which work collaboratively to sustainably manage all commercial and recreational fishing activities across Western Australia.

The PRESIDENT: I can highly recommend the green lip abalone and truffles that were available at the Augusta Boat Harbour opening!