NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA, AUSTRALIA

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Wednesday 25 February 2015

Good progress on $6.5m Taroona aquaculture facility

Development of a $6.5m government and industry-funded aquaculture facility at the University of Tasmania's Taroona campus is underway.

An inspection of the early progress of the Taroona site, which is managed by the University's Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS), was arranged this morning.

The new experimental research facility is being built for collaborative aquaculture research, particularly with the Atlantic salmon industry. Tasmania's salmon farming is by far the largest aquaculture industry in Australia and largest seafood producer in Tasmania.

Tasmania provides an ideal location for research on salmon farming due to change often occurring here first. The facility will be attractive to students and researchers from the Northern Hemisphere and Chile where salmon are farmed.

Funded by the Commonwealth and Tasmanian governments, the Australian Seafood Cooperative Research Centre, the University of Tasmania, Huon Aquaculture Group and Skretting Australia, it will be unique in the Southern Hemisphere.

University of Tasmania Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Rathjen said the facility was an example of what was possible when impactful research and innovation was supported in partnership with industry and Government.

"Today is an opportunity to recognise and thank our industry backers, along with both governments, for a project which underpins a critical and emerging economic sector for the State," Professor Rathjen said. "The work we are doing with the aquaculture industry through IMAS in both Hobart and Launceston is an example of how innovation can drive industry growth and economic revitalisation for Tasmania."

The Head of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Centre, Professor Chris Carter, said that once constructed, Taroona would be the only finfish aquaculture research facility in the Southern Hemisphere for large production sized finfish. The facility would use cutting-edge recirculation technology and provide environment control to conduct high-level science.

"The broader benefit is to teaching from our Taroona and Launceston campuses which specialise in aquaculture and marine environmental studies," he said.

He said the Fisheries and Aquaculture Centre at IMAS has major strengths in aquatic animal health and nutrition research. Upwards of 100 students have been awarded PhDs in these fields. Many more have done Honours and the University presently has a range of aquaculture courses.

The main focus of research will be health and nutrition.

Professor Carter said: “The partnership between industry and IMAS researchers allows us to address local needs and major global questions about climate change effects, seafood quality, replacement of marine ingredients, and amoebic gill disease.”

Work on the facility is expected to be completed by June. A 10-year agreement is in place between the University of Tasmania and industry for salmon and oyster research.

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