



Farmed fish the future 'crop'

Consumers should be better educated about the benefits of eating land-based farmed fish instead of wild caught stocks, argues **Robert Sewell**, chairman of the Fremantle-based listed seafood company **Cell Aquaculture Limited**.

OVER-fishing is depleting wild caught fish stocks and we need to find sustainable alternatives now. The chronic situation is due to an enormous demand for high quality premium seafood among middle-class consumers.

For example, according to the latest reports, per capita fish consumption in the US has risen 35 per cent over the past 20 years and one in every five restaurant dollars in New York is spent on fish.

Everyone knows eating fish is really, really good for you. Not only is it packed with vitamins and minerals, it is also a major source of omega-3 fatty acids, and recent studies have found this lowers the chance of heart attack, makes babies smarter and wards off dementia and stroke in the elderly.

Many fisheries are very well run and our own local rock lobster industry is a good example. But the global trend is a worrying one.

As a veteran of more than 27-years experience in directorships and board roles in the grain industry – representing West Australian interests at a national and international level and leading many international marketing missions to all parts of the world – I've seen first hand the trends in food consumption. Production of fish in sea cages in the ocean is not necessarily the answer because of the possible effect on the environment.

Because of these factors I believe consumers should now be questioning retailers and restaurant owners about the source of fish being sold.

If demand is increasing at an unsustainable level, what is the solution?

Well, the solution is land-based fish farming of species like barramundi, because it is environmentally friendly and meets the increasing demand for fish as part of a healthy diet in a sustainable way.

The land-based system removes the fish from the open waterways and therefore eliminates any chance of pollution.

As I'm still actively involved in farming with my son and son-in-law on our family property at Wongan Hills, north east of Perth and growing around 4000ha of grain crops annually, I under-

stand intimately the environmental consequences of food production.

In a closed system fish are grown with no antibiotics or genetic modification and kept in a clean, green environment.

Cell Aquaculture, which listed on the Australian Stock Exchange in July last year, is a global leader in developing land-based systems for growing high quality premium fish everywhere in the world and our "From Hatch To Despatch" system is very unique.

In fact there are three things that are major differentiators for Cell and I call these the three T's.

1. TECHNOLOGY – Ours is proven, low risk and cost effective.

It is based on our own patented recirculating system to grow fish in a controlled, environmentally sustainable way.

2. TABLE FRESH – Our goal is to grow high quality premium fish everywhere in the world and supply it at peak freshness 'Right on any market's door-step'.

3. TREND LEADER – A chronic over-fishing of natural seafood stocks is leading to an enormous demand for high quality premium seafood and Cell Aquaculture is well positioned as a market leader to satisfy this consumer trend.

Land-based fish farming is 10 to 15 years behind the intensive poultry and pig industries and our goal is to bridge that gap and take the risk out of growing fish, as well as making consumers more aware of where the fish they are eating is coming from.

In a world where demand for quality seafood is increasing, the need to supply adequate quantities of seafood to an ageing and increasingly health-conscious world population highlights the vital importance of looking to environmentally sustainable land-based systems of seafood production.

We have successfully built our first European production facility in the Netherlands, have signed an agreement to grow fish in the US and aim to be a global company involved in all aspects of the production and sale of quality high-end priced seafood.



And this is all done from our base in Fremantle. So I am confident that fish grown using our systems and services provides a real and viable alternative to wild caught stocks.

■ More information about Cell Aquaculture

Limited, which is a public company listed on the Australian Stock Exchange under the code CAQ, can be found on our website www.cellaqua.com and visitors can subscribe to our free electronic newsletter *Inside Cell*.

