

Aquaculture in New Zealand

AQUACULTURE.GOV.T.NZ

When you fly over New Zealand you can see a patchwork of working farms – from apple orchards to deer farms to dairy farms to forests. As you fly over the coastal waters of our island nation you might also see marine farms.

– **AQUACULTURE IN ACTION**, a web-based educational resource developed by the New Zealand government and available at aquaculture.govt.nz/publications_0.php



PHOTO CREDIT:
Peter Singleton, Environment Waikato



PHOTO CREDIT:
Cawthron Institute

New Zealand has a global reputation for farm produce – not just for what we grow on the land, but for what we farm in our seas as well.

A large part of the aquaculture industry's success to date is based on its reputation for sustainable, high-value, innovative products which meet the needs of increasingly sophisticated consumers – at home and abroad.

The future growth of the industry depends on it continuing to grow sustainably and further develop markets for its products, particularly offshore. Already New Zealand aquaculture has a good story to tell: international conservation organisation, Blue Ocean Institute, has given one of its highest ratings to New Zealand's Greenshell™ mussel in its "sea to table program", deeming it to be one of the top two sustainable seafoods in the world.

In the following pages you can learn about New Zealand aquaculture and the ways that the government is supporting the development of an environmentally sustainable aquaculture industry. The government's commitment to environmental

sustainability means our aquaculture planning processes are supported by sound information. These processes also closely involve communities in decision making.

➔ Get more information online

We've put more detailed information online so wherever you see the arrow symbol it means you can visit the website which gives you the policies, practices and performance behind all our information.

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Planning for aquaculture

Aquaculture's good management practices and respect for scientific and community input easily place it amongst the high environmental performers of New Zealand's primary sector industries.

This, plus New Zealand's high standards of coastal water quality, gives us a real competitive edge in global markets. Marine farmers, like the rest of us, want to see these high standards maintained.

The planning and approval process for coastal aquaculture in New Zealand considers each farm's potential environmental effects, as well as its possible cultural and social effects.

These processes are run by democratically elected regional councils, under the guidelines of the Resource Management Act (RMA). This is the principal New Zealand law governing coastal management and the growth and management of coastal uses, including aquaculture.

The purpose of the RMA is the sustainable management of our resources. The Act encourages New Zealanders (as communities and as individuals) to plan for the future of our environment in a sustainable way. It sets out the principles and framework for good environmental decision making.

RMA decision-making is coordinated by district and regional councils working closely with the local community and other stakeholders. This is because communities are best placed to know their own surroundings and should be involved in decisions regarding use of the coast and other natural resources.

In order to assist planning within the coastal environment, the RMA has the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS). The NZCPS is prepared and recommended by the Minister of Conservation. It states policies to guide regional councils and other decision makers on sustainable management in the coastal environment, including decisions relating to aquaculture.

Regional councils work with communities, industry and other stakeholders to identify appropriate locations for new Aquaculture Management Areas (AMAs). Councils are responsible for a number of steps in the AMA approval and coastal permit approval processes, including setting conditions around farm operations and monitoring farms to ensure compliance.

Regional council decisions can be appealed to the Environment Court and higher courts. Final approval of AMAs sits with the Minister of Conservation.

In addition to this, the government and industry are working in partnership to develop nationwide standards for sustainable aquaculture. The industry is also working with the World Wildlife Fund to develop global standards for shellfish culture.

These standards are expected to support sustainable production methods such as those used in New Zealand. The standards are also expected to give the New Zealand public confidence in the changing local industry.

→ Visit aquaculture.govt.nz/regional_projects.php to learn more about aquaculture planning.



PHOTO CREDIT:
Graeme Silver,
Environment Waikato



PHOTO CREDIT:
NZ Seafood Industry Council

Environmental sustainability

Environmental sustainability is critical to the long-term success of New Zealand aquaculture. Being environmentally sustainable is also a market imperative.

For example, the relative absence of inorganic toxins and the pathogen-free aquatic environment mean that New Zealand is one of the few countries in the world where shellfish do not require depuration prior to processing. In other words, it is in everyone's best interest to ensure a high environmental standard for aquaculture.

Still, like other farming activities, marine farming does have an impact on the immediate environment. To mitigate many of these environmental impacts, the New Zealand government has a number of regulations in place. Most marine farmers also follow best practices set within the industry to meet the growing global demand for safe, healthy seafood products.

→ [Learn more at \[aquaculture.govt.nz/environment.php\]\(http://aquaculture.govt.nz/environment.php\)](http://aquaculture.govt.nz/environment.php)



PHOTO CREDIT:
Aquaculture New Zealand

Developing standards

World Wildlife Fund in the United States has developed a global Aquaculture Dialogue programme to support the international aquaculture industry in developing environmental standards.

In New Zealand, WWF is working with industry, government, scientists, iwi and other NGOs to develop these standards for Greenshell™ mussels, Pacific oysters and other mollusc species.

"More and more countries are turning to aquaculture as a food source," says Rebecca Bird, marine programme manager, WWF-New Zealand. "In fact, aquaculture is the fastest-growing food production system in the world. WWF's goal is to ensure that the growth is managed with environmental sustainability as a key input. Working with industry and government to establish measurable standards to support future product eco-certification and informing consumer choice is one way we can work toward this goal."

WWF-US mollusc aquaculture dialogue coordinator, Colin Brannen, visited Nelson in mid-April 2008 to initiate discussions. He says, "WWF has convened a series of regional dialogues, including in New Zealand and in Australia, to help countries develop standards for responsible mollusc farming. New Zealand is already considered a world leader in sustainable aquaculture production. Establishing recognisable and consistent standards will be an important step for the industry to take in order to keep this edge."

At the Nelson meeting, a sub-committee of eight was nominated to drive the development of national draft standards. It is anticipated the process will take two to three years.



PHOTO CREDIT:
Queen Charlotte College

New Zealand's relatively clean water, advanced national biotoxin monitoring programme, robust research capabilities, and proactive industry have all ensured strong growth.

➔ [Visit `aquaculture.govt.nz/markets`](https://aquaculture.govt.nz/markets)

Marine farming in New Zealand

Before the 1990s, marine farming was a relatively small industry in New Zealand, with small farms dotted around the coast, mostly in the Marlborough Sounds, Northland and around the Coromandel Peninsula.

Over the next 10 years, marine farming grew at an exponential rate with demand for water space increasing five-fold. New Zealand's relatively clean water, advanced national biotoxin monitoring programme, robust research capabilities, and proactive industry all ensured strong growth. By 2000 it had become clear that the existing ways of managing marine farming could not cope with the increase in demand.

There were two main concerns: increased delays for marine farm applications for new space and rising costs in the processing of resource consent applications; and communities were raising concerns that the possible effects of marine farming were not being fully recognised and managed. So changes began, starting with a moratorium on new aquaculture permits between November 2001 and December 2004. The aquaculture law reform came into effect on 1 January 2005.

KEEPING PACE

Growth in aquaculture has continued to keep pace however, even when the moratorium on permits was in place. Under the moratorium all applications for new aquaculture space were stopped, but a large number of applications that had already been notified by regional councils before 28 November 2001 were allowed to proceed under New Zealand's old aquaculture law. These old law applications require both a resource consent from the relevant regional council and a marine farming permit from the Ministry of Fisheries.

The net result: as of 28 November 2001, 9,086 ha of aquaculture space existed in New Zealand. As of June 2008, that number has increased to 14,188 ha – a 56 per cent increase in about six and a half years. Of the 14,188 ha of current aquaculture space:

- 7,713 ha is owned by the aquaculture industry and is in known productive growing areas
- 4,010 belongs to the Challenger Scallop Enhancement Company and is used to enhance the wild scallop fishery
- 2,465 ha is an exposed site six kilometres offshore from Napier. Owners of the site are still undertaking research and trials to test the site's economic viability.

WHAT DOES THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE HOLD?

As of June 2008, the Ministry of Fisheries still has 24 applications left to process under the old law. These applications total 9,381 ha. It is anticipated most of these applications will be completed in 2008–2009.

MOVING FORWARD UNDER THE NEW LAW

Following recommendations from the Minister of Conservation to the Governor-General to declare interim Aquaculture Management Areas (AMAs) in Tasman and Waikato, the Ministry of Fisheries now has interim AMAs to process in these two regions. The Tasman region's interim AMAs occupy 2,108 ha. The Waikato interim AMA is 520 ha in size. Decisions on the interim AMAs should also be finalised in 2008–2009.

[➔ Learn more at \[aquaculture.govt.nz/aquaculture_today.php\]\(http://aquaculture.govt.nz/aquaculture_today.php\)](http://aquaculture.govt.nz/aquaculture_today.php)

Regional snapshots 2008

A number of regional councils are currently involved in aquaculture planning efforts. We have highlighted three regional councils that have made recent announcements about aquaculture development in their regions.

ENVIRONMENT WAIKATO

In March 2008, a significant step was taken towards the development of a new marine farming zone in Wilson Bay when two interim Aquaculture Management Areas (AMAs) in the Firth of Thames were declared by an Order in Council. The new Wilson Bay Marine Farming Zone is 1.5 kilometres off the coast at Kereta, around five kilometres south of the entrance to Coromandel Harbour.

Environment Waikato has asked the Ministry of Fisheries to consider any effects of the interim AMAs on fishing and fisheries resources. Once the Ministry has completed its assessment and imposed any necessary reservations, 20 per cent of the new space in the AMA will be allocated to Māori as part of the commercial aquaculture claims settlement.

AUCKLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL

Also in March 2008, the Auckland Regional Council announced that it has chosen to take an initial precautionary position on the future management of marine farming in the region's coastal marine area, and is to consult on this position. This approach does not affect any existing marine farming operations, the continuation of which is covered by the 2005 law reforms.

The ARC has approved preliminary consultation to start on draft principles, directions and concepts for a regional aquaculture policy framework, and indicative excluded areas. The ARC began consultation in May. Wider or pre-notification consultation is expected to begin in late September and continue through to March 2009.

Formal notification of a proposed variation to the Auckland Regional Plan: Coastal, and subsequent submissions to it, are anticipated to follow this process in 2009.

NORTHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL

In April 2008, the Northland Regional Council announced that parts of Northland have been recommended to be off-limits to marine farming based on recommendations from a four-member hearings committee which considered more than 330 submissions on the council's proposal to establish an aquaculture planning framework for Northland.

Legally, new marine farms can only be developed in areas formally designated as AMAs by regional councils. This decision means the Northland Regional Council is drawing close to the end of a lengthy process designed to ensure evaluation criteria it uses to consider applications for AMAs are as robust as possible.

→ To learn about aquaculture development in your region visit aquaculture.govt.nz/by_region.php



PHOTO CREDIT:
New Zealand Aquaculture magazine



PHOTO CREDIT:
Aquaculture New Zealand

The \$2 million contestable aquaculture planning fund is available to regional councils and unitary authorities. The fund is aimed at helping councils realise the economic and other benefits that sustainable aquaculture can bring to their regions.



Contestable Aquaculture Planning Fund

The government has a \$2 million contestable fund available to regional councils and unitary authorities that is aimed at helping councils realise the economic and other benefits that sustainable aquaculture can bring to their regions. It can be used to assist their aquaculture planning through work such as initial information gathering, consultation with interested parties, planning work projects and other groundwork.

FUNDS AWARDED TO DATE

Round 1 – May 2007

Environment Waikato/Auckland Regional Council (A)
Aquaculture exclusion areas – Auckland and Waikato
Funding approved: \$54,000

Environment Waikato/Auckland Regional Council (B)
Aquaculture – Māori consultation
Funding approved: \$27,000

Environment Waikato
Supporting information for the experimental aquaculture plan
Funding approved: \$72,000

Environment Bay of Plenty
Monitoring phytoplankton in the Eastern Bay of Plenty
Funding approved: \$16,000

Northland Regional Council
Aquaculture plan change processing – consultant support
Funding approved: \$230,000

Round 2 – November 2007

Environment Canterbury
Policies, procedure and documentation for establishing Canterbury's AMAs
Funding approved: \$98,320

Environment Waikato
Method development: assessing benthic impact of aquaculture
Funding approved: \$24,000

CURRENT STATUS (JUNE 2008)

Approximately \$1.4 million remains in the planning fund budget. This amount excludes the May 2008 funding round. Applications for the May 2008 funding round are currently being assessed.

Round 4 of the fund is due to open in October 2008, however the exact date requires confirmation. The date will be posted on the Ministry for the Environment's website once confirmed.

If you wish to be added to a contact list or for further process information regarding the contestable fund please contact Bruce Croucher, Ministry for the Environment, DDI 04 439 7618 or bruce.croucher@mfe.govt.nz. For technical information please contact Lisa Hack, Ministry for the Environment, DDI 09 985 4824 or lisa.hack@mfe.govt.nz.

→ To learn more visit aquaculture.govt.nz/contestable_fund.php

Government support

The aquaculture industry is supported through a whole-of-government approach led by the Ministry of Fisheries. There are a number of other central government agencies involved in aquaculture development, including the Department of Conservation, Ministry for the Environment, Ministry of Economic Development, New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, and Te Puni Kōkiri.

The National Aquaculture Position Statement in *Our Blue Horizon* is the guiding document for the government's work. The principles contained within the position statement include maximising economic benefits, stewardship, promoting innovation, Māori participation and good governance. These principles outline the government's support for the aquaculture industry achieving maximum sustainable growth, while also meeting regional, national and international expectations for environmental, social and economic performance.

Supporting industry in identifying and accessing international markets

New Zealand Trade and Enterprise has made a provisional allocation of \$6.5 million to Aquaculture New Zealand as part of a Food and Beverage Taskforce commitment to help the sector achieve its goal of \$1 billion in sales per annum by 2025.

The activities undertaken by Aquaculture New Zealand will support the following strategic priorities:

1. building value through greater margins of existing species and products
2. building value through higher-value products
3. identification of new species driven by market demand
4. strengthening the industry's position in accessing new markets
5. building capability and cohesion across the sector.

The specific programme of work is reviewed and agreed to by New Zealand Trade and Enterprise and Aquaculture New Zealand on an annual basis.

→ [Learn more at aquaculture.govt.nz/governments_role.php](https://aquaculture.govt.nz/governments_role.php)



PHOTO CREDIT:
New Zealand
King Salmon Company



PHOTO CREDIT:
New Zealand
King Salmon Company

Māori involvement

Māori are already significant players in the New Zealand aquaculture industry and their role is expected to grow in the coming years.

Te Puni Kōkiri is working with Māori to develop resources for a sustainable growth framework that takes into account both commercial and kaitiaki (stewardship) aspirations. This will include actively engaging Māori participation at all levels of the industry.

Strengthening Māori success in aquaculture requires the following factors:

- new aquaculture developments must be sound business propositions
- Māori must have access to industry and commercial expertise
- Māori must have the knowledge and human resources to actively participate in the planning process, specifically the Resource Management Act
- emphasis on iwi working together at a regional level to maximise the benefits of the settlement assets
- wider environmental concerns must balance with commercial aquaculture aspirations
- collaboration and relationship building between iwi, community, industry, regional and central government.

Investigating options for settlement space according to the Maori Commercial Aquaculture Claims Settlement Act 2004 is a key priority for iwi. To ensure this participation, the government is supporting the building of Māori capacity and knowledge, particularly around strategic planning for aquaculture development, and to resolve potential conflicts between customary and commercial objectives. The government is also encouraging commercial ventures between Māori and industry.

A framework for sustainable growth will ensure Māori participation in aquaculture. This will include ensuring that government business assistance programmes and regional development programmes adequately support aquaculture development.

→ [Find out more at aquaculture.govt.nz/maori_development.php](http://aquaculture.govt.nz/maori_development.php)



PHOTO CREDIT:
New Zealand
Aquaculture magazine



PHOTO CREDIT:
Cawthron Institute

Supporting innovation

The government supports research and innovation in a number of ways, including exploring options for new aquaculture species and technologies in both existing and new aquaculture space.

The government is also committed to helping the industry develop its aquaculture research strategy, which will provide guidance to providers and the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology about the research priorities for aquaculture in the next five to ten years.

→ Find out about innovations within the aquaculture industry at aquaculture.govt.nz/innovation.php

Purpose-built aquaculture centre

At the end of 2007, a new purpose-built aquaculture centre was opened at Mahurangi Technical Institute in Warkworth. The institute is among the top three institutes in the world in the area of research on breeding eels.

The institute aims to be the first in the world to produce commercial quantities of eels in captivity. Already the government, through the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology, has given \$630,000 to this important research programme.

Scientists at the institute are cautiously optimistic that they will be able to breed short-fin eels within two years. If so, New Zealand will be able to develop a self-sustaining eel farming population.



PHOTO CREDIT:
Cawthron Institute



PHOTO CREDIT:
Mahurangi Technical Institute

The industry is developing its aquaculture research strategy, which will provide guidance to providers and the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology about the research priorities for aquaculture in the next five to ten years.

Giving cancer the sponge

A New Zealand sea sponge may hold the key to an anti-cancer drug. Victoria University cell biologist Professor John Miller and a team of scientists are working to see how peloruside, a substance produced by sponges in the Pelorus Sound, might be used as a cancer-fighting drug.

While the drug is still currently in a developmental stage, Prof Miller hopes to take the research to a clinical trial in the near future.

“Currently New Zealand is the only known place that peloruside can be found, so scientists are working with us to find a way of synthesising the natural product,” Prof Miller says.

As part of the project, Victoria University in partnership with the National Institute of Water & Atmospheric Research worked with Marlborough marine farmers to develop a method for growing the sponge on an existing mussel farm.

One of the lead scientists on the project, Victoria University’s Peter Northcote, says, “Our early growing success on the marine farm allowed us to produce enough peloruside to get to this critical juncture in the research. While the future of growing the sponge on marine farms is not certain we have learned vast amounts from the project and have taken the project from a ‘wow, isn’t that interesting concept’ to the clinical testing stage.”

In 2002, the project received a \$2 million grant from the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology to fund this research.



PHOTO CREDIT:
Mike Page, NIWA



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Mike Page, NIWA

Victoria University cell biologist Professor John Miller and a team of scientists are working to see how peloruside, a substance produced by sponges in the Pelorus Sound, might be used as a cancer-fighting drug.

New Zealand's top three aquaculture species

GREENSHELL™ MUSSELS

Our native green-lipped mussels have been a New Zealand seafood delicacy for centuries. When farm-raised, they are called Greenshell™ mussels.

New Zealand began farming these over 30 years ago. Since then, the domestic and international demand for this product has grown dramatically.

In 2006, New Zealanders ate \$43 million worth of farmed Greenshell™ mussels and exported a further \$181 million worth, making this New Zealand's biggest aquaculture business.

All Greenshell™ mussels are grown in New Zealand coastal waters on longlines supported by floats. The main growing regions are Marlborough and the Coromandel.

New Zealand regulations, monitoring programmes and industry codes of practice ensure Greenshell™ mussels are farmed in a sustainable manner. Regulations and monitoring also ensure these mussels meet the highest standards of food safety.

KING SALMON

A number of salmon species were introduced to New Zealand in the early 1900s as sport-fish, but only the king, or Chinook salmon, adapted to our environment. Farming of this species began in the 1980s.

In 2006, New Zealanders ate \$59 million worth of locally farmed salmon and exported a further \$42 million worth.

Any fresh or chilled salmon products sold in New Zealand will be locally farmed king salmon.

Most farm-raised king salmon are grown in sea-cages. The low stocking densities used and the lack of disease in the wild population mean New Zealand farmers do not need the antibiotics and chemicals that are often used in salmon farms elsewhere. Some of our king salmon are grown on land, in freshwater farms.

PACIFIC OYSTERS

Farmers began raising native New Zealand rock oysters on wooden racks in the late 1960s.

Around 1970, the Pacific oyster was accidentally introduced to New Zealand from Asia (possibly on vessel hulls or in their ballast water). Farmers discovered the Pacific oyster grew faster and could be farmed more reliably than its native cousin. By the mid 1970s, Pacific oysters had become the main farm-raised oyster in New Zealand.

In 2006, New Zealanders ate \$14 million worth of farmed Pacific oysters and exported a further \$18 million worth.

Any fresh or chilled Pacific oyster products sold in New Zealand have been farmed here.

Most of our farm-raised Pacific oysters are grown on wooden racks in sheltered and shallow bays around the northern North Island.

New Zealand regulations, monitoring programmes and industry codes of practice ensure Pacific oysters are farmed in a sustainable manner. Regulations and monitoring also ensure these oysters meet the highest standards of food safety.

→ [To learn more visit \[aquaculture.govt.nz\]\(https://aquaculture.govt.nz\)](https://aquaculture.govt.nz)

Marine farms by region (June 2008)

NORTHLAND

Main activity: mostly oyster farms and some mussel farms

Total area: 704.9 ha

AUCKLAND

Main activity: mostly oyster farms and some mussel farms

Total area: 326 ha

WAIKATO

Main activity: mostly mussel farms and some oyster farms

Total area: 1,044.4 ha

BAY OF PLENTY

Main activity: oyster and mussel farms

Total area: 9.6 ha

EAST CAPE

No marine farms at this time

HAWKE'S BAY

Main activity: one large offshore site; currently undergoing trials for a number of species

Total area: 2,469 ha

TARANAKI

No marine farms at this time

MANAWATU-WANGANUI

No marine farms at this time

WELLINGTON

Main activity: the small farms in Wellington are used to trial a range of species

Total area: 4.3 ha

NELSON

No marine farms at this time

TASMAN

Main activity: mussel farming and mussel and scallop spat catching

Total area: 6,086.8 ha

MARLBOROUGH

Main activity: mussel farming and some salmon farming along with trials of new species

Total area: 3,023.8 ha

WEST COAST

Main activity: one mussel farm

Total area: 45.6 ha

CANTERBURY

Main activity: mussel farming along with some salmon and pāua farming

Total area: 179.4 ha

OTAGO

No marine farms at this time

SOUTHLAND

Main activity: mussel and salmon farming

Total area: 285.9 ha

CHATHAM ISLANDS

Main activity: one site currently not used

Total area: 8 ha

Source: Ministry of Fisheries

➔ To learn about aquaculture development in your region visit aquaculture.govt.nz/by_region.php



2006 Aquaculture Industry Farm Statistics

TOP THREE SPECIES

SPECIES	NUMBER OF FARMS	TOTAL HA OF MARINE SPACE	TONNES HARVESTED
GREENSHELL™ MUSSELS	645	4,747	97,000
PACIFIC OYSTERS	230	750	2,800
KING SALMON	23	60	7,721

Source: New Zealand Aquaculture Council Annual Report 2006–2007

SALES FIGURE COMPARISON

ALL FIGURES IN NZ \$ MILLION	1986			2006		
	EXPORT	DOMESTIC	TOTAL	EXPORT	DOMESTIC	TOTAL
GREENSHELL™ MUSSELS	12	16	28	181	43	224
KING SALMON	3	6	9	42	59	101
PACIFIC OYSTERS	5	6	11	18	14	32

Source: New Zealand Aquaculture Council Annual Report 2006–2007

Notes:

Domestic sales are industry estimates, ex-factory gate. Export sales are FOB, ex-Department of Statistics.



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This publication has been prepared by the Ministry of Fisheries in association with the Department of Conservation, Ministry for the Environment, Ministry of Economic Development, New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, and Te Puni Kōkiri.

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Publications

Below are a few of the documents published in 2007/2008 that are available through aquaculture.govt.nz

Aquaculture in action – fact sheets developed by the New Zealand government (available in both English and Māori) for children, complemented by lesson plans and curriculum links for teachers to use in the classroom, February 2008.

Aquaculture Risk Management Options, Stimpson & Co, prepared for the Ministry for the Environment, December 2007.

Short Term Aquaculture Research Stocktake of Regional Coastal Plan Provisions, Opus International Consultants Ltd, prepared for the Department of Conservation, 2007.

Review of the ecological effects of marine finfish aquaculture: final report, Cawthron Institute, prepared for the Ministry of Fisheries, 2007.

A series of fact sheets developed by Te Puni Kōkiri for nationwide hui held in 2007 covering the following topics: Aquaculture Industry; Roles and Responsibilities in Aquaculture; Business Services for Aquaculture; Aquaculture Science Providers; The Aquaculture Settlement; and Planning for Aquaculture.

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Sophie Wilson



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