

Snapper ready to go semi-commercial

Snapper (*P. auratus*) show some real potential to be developed as an aquaculture species, says the scientist now leading a 20-year research programme for Plant & Food Research (PFR).

Assoc. Prof. Maren Wellenreuther heads a 30 strong team based in Nelson, with access to both land-based facilities and a holding pen in Beatrix Bay.



She told the August Smart+Connected Aquaculture meeting that while the research has also included other species such as trevally, snapper has now been developed to a point where it is ready to be commercially trialled.

PFR has been breeding snapper stocks since the early 2000s and is now after four generations, producing fish that gain weight 40-50% faster than wild snapper.

Maren says snapper have a number of advantages as a potential candidate for aquaculture.

The PFR research has shown they spawn and grow readily in captivity; they are hardy and resistant to disease and can be grown all around the North Island where we currently do not commercially farm finfish, and in the Marlborough Sounds where the water temperatures are starting to become too warm for salmon.



Additionally, they respond well to a fed diet and had low mortality when weaned off live food. Snapper are also closely related to already successful aquaculture species elsewhere, such as red sea bream in Japan, and the gilthead seabream in the Mediterranean, which are proven aquaculture species.

She said PFR would be excited to start a semi-commercial trial and had begun some discussions in this area.

The snapper were doing well in the Sounds pen and PFR is currently running a trial with the elite snapper stock in the pen over winter.

Ngai Tahu Seafood (NTS) is enabling PFR scientists to undertake research in the NTS-owned Beatrix Bay Sea Pen in Pelorus Sound.

Brendon Burns

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