



AQUACULTURE

IN THE GASCOYNE

History of Aquaculture in the Gascoyne region

Key Aquaculture Statistics:

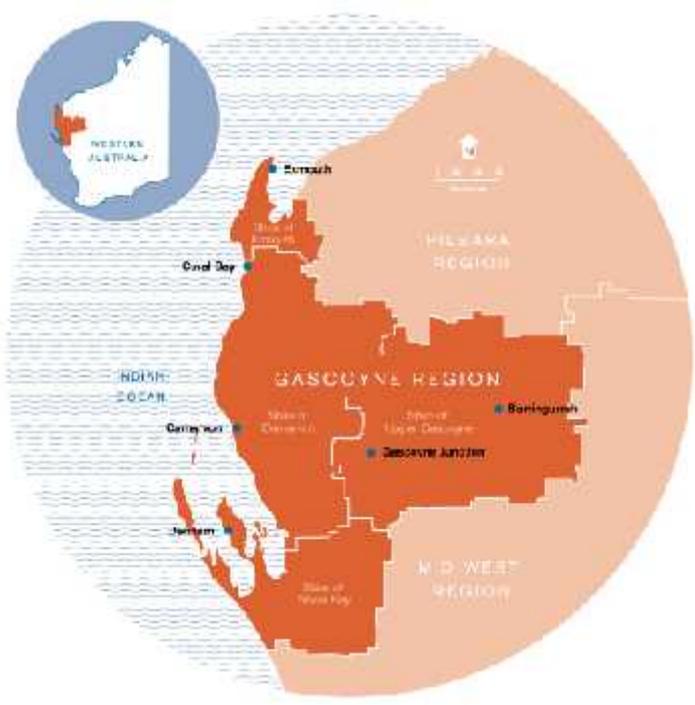
- Production Value - Aquaculture: \$10 million (2015)
- Production Value - Fishing: \$40 million (2015)
- Employment - Total Workforce: 80 (2015)
- Major Species: pearling and prawns

Aquaculture ventures commenced in the Gascoyne coast bioregion in the 1960s, although early efforts in pearling began in the late 1800s.

The marine environment of the Gascoyne is as much in demand for its conservation and recreation values as it is for its fish stocks and, as a consequence, there are a number of marine protected areas in the Gascoyne Coast bioregion.

Today, there are several commercial fisheries operating in the Gascoyne Coast bioregion. The Shark Bay and Exmouth Gulf managed prawn fisheries are two of the State's most valuable commercial fisheries with combined catches in the range of \$40-50 million annually.

The region hosts a small pearling industry and small operations in Koi Carp and other ornamental fish. Pilot projects involving giant clams, freshwater aquarium fish, oysters and beta carotene productions have also been trialled.



Regional Advantages for Aquaculture:

The pristine waters of the Gascoyne coast bioregion provide the perfect marine environment. With water temperatures ranging from 22°C to 28°C and many natural marine incubators such as coral reef, sand flats and seagrass beds, the Gascoyne has superior breeding grounds, fish nurseries and feeding habitats. These conditions contribute to both successful commercial fisheries and a popular recreational fishery.

The Gascoyne's mid sub-tropical climate, secure water supply and abundant land provide the opportunity for quality aquaculture products to be produced for both domestic and international markets. Increased access to artesian bore water has the potential to support the sustainability and growth of pastoral operations to support feed production and onshore aquaculture.

Native species with potential include oysters, scallops, Westralian dhufish, mahi mahi, whiting, yellow fin tuna king fish and other crustaceans. The region also possess large amounts of semi protected coastline providing opportunities for sea cage aquaculture of temperate to tropical marine finfish.



Current Commercial Operations:

The commercial fisheries of the Gascoyne coast bioregion are the Shark Bay Prawn and Scallop Managed Fisheries, Exmouth Gulf Prawn Managed Fishery, the Shark Bay Crab (interim) Managed Fishery, the Gascoyne Demersal Fishery and the Inner Shark Bay Scalefish Fishery.

Current Projects, Studies and Research:

The Gascoyne Development Commission (Commission) is strongly supportive of growth in aquaculture.

The need to identify sites for aquaculture development is considered essential to expand the aquaculture industry and aligns with the Gascoyne Regional Investment Blueprint. The Commission, with assistance from the Western Australian Department of Fisheries, will undertake a feasibility study for the development of Aquaculture Development Zones. This will make it faster, less costly and more efficient to set up aquaculture businesses within the region and allow for a less onerous approval process for investors in aquaculture projects.

The Gascoyne is poised to be a leader in the development of aquaculture in northern Australia. New investment has already taken place with the proposal of a quarantine/founder stock centre to be located in Exmouth as part of Project Sea Dragon.

Investment Opportunities:

Aquaculture represents a significant opportunity for the region. Global seafood demand continues to grow and by 2018, aquaculture is expected to overtake wild capture as the primary source of production. Major private sector investment is required to realise this opportunity.

In 2014, the Commission completed an Aquaculture in the Gascoyne Study which highlighted opportunities for aquaculture expansion, including:

- Coral aquaculture, especially in the face of climate change which renders coral reefs vulnerable to bleaching
- Value adding including precooked seafood meal, seafood additives for other food products
- Farming, including prawn, barramundi, finfish, aquarium, oyster and giant clam
- Expansion of farming tropical species utilising artesian bore water on pastoral land
- Ancillary aquaculture ventures with Shark Bay Solar Salt for brine shrimp and beta carotene production.

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