

Opening of the IIFET 2002 Conference 19 August 2002 by the Vice Chancellor of Victoria University of Wellington Professor Stuart McCutcheon

It is a pleasure for me to welcome delegates to this, the biennial conference of the International Institute of Fisheries Economics and Trade (IIFET). This conference marks the twentieth anniversary of the founding of IIFET. In particular I want to welcome delegates from overseas, and those of you from other Universities.

IIFET conferences encourage participation from academics, industry leaders and government decision-makers. Its members are, amongst other occupations, economists, biologists, ecologists, legal scholars, food scientists, historians, social scientists, resource users, resource managers, fish traders, food distributors and marketers. A wide and intriguing list.

As Vice Chancellor of this University it is always an interesting opportunity to welcome fellow academics from other countries to our campus. I am told that there are representatives of over 40 countries here today, that you will have the chance to hear in excess of 200 papers and participate fully in debate.

The IIFET 2002 conference is entitled "Fisheries in the Global Economy". The conference will provide a stimulating focus for all participants to debate and assess the future management of fisheries in the global economy. The conference will be an interactive opportunity, with panel discussions and debate encouraged, in addition to keynote speakers and presentation of papers.

Fisheries and their management in the global context will be discussed in terms of future paths for fisheries management, including resolution of customary fishing issues and increasing emphasis on rules based trade reform, including market access issues such as ecolabelling.

These issues will be discussed in the context also of the expansion of regional approaches to high seas fisheries, and fisheries in the context of ecosystem management and development of Oceans Policy.

All these issues are important to New Zealand, particularly in view of our Quota Management System introduced into New Zealand in 1986 as our Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) system. I look forward to robust debate on this.

Whilst there are many views on its efficacy – a number of which you will hear at this conference, it has been in place and expanded its scope over the last 17 years and forms the keystone to New Zealand's management of its commercial fisheries. I am sure delegates look forward to hearing presentations on the future of the rights based approach, concerns about the protection of the environment and its place in the wider context of oceans policy.

Issues of trade in fish and fish products is another area of significant interest to New Zealand. As a nation that is reliant on international trade for its economic well being, but which also is concerned about the environment, international trade is important to us. We have taken a stance in the international market place of reducing and indeed eliminating tariffs and other trade barriers in the fishing sector as with all our international trade. Again this is a stance that is the subject of debate nationally and internationally. This conference will also be looking at some of the issues that arise out of WTO work, in particular implications for trade access.

As Vice Chancellor it is also of interest to me to see on the conference agenda a wide range of papers within the broad Theme of Theoretical and Empirical Bio-economic Analysis. This will cover many aspects of bio-economic analysis of fisheries management and utilisation and is designed to encourage theoretical and empirical fisheries economics research.

I believe that it is important that Universities internationally encourage such research, which must form the basis of much of the policy development that Governments seek to put into place. Equally it allows the private sector to have a sound basis for decision making. Looking at the topics for presentation in this Theme I would suggest that research on the economic aspects of fishery management and development is well served by the papers to be presented.

In conclusion I want to thank you for choosing the facilities of this University for your conference and to wish you well with your deliberations.

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