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Intelligence

CSIRO introduces pompano to Australian aquaculture to boost economy

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By Responsible Seafood Advocate

Production of new white-fleshed fish could boost the economy and reduce imports

A new white-flesh fish industry could soon boost Australia's economy by over \$1 billion, following successful breeding trials and positive market testing by the national science agency, CSIRO.

The pompano (*Trachinotus anak*), identified as an ideal species for aquaculture in northern Australia's tropical climate, offers a sustainable solution to meet the country's rising demand for locally sourced seafood. The initiative could also reduce reliance on the 100,000 tons of imported white-flesh fish annually, positioning Australia's aquaculture sector for significant growth.

"The pompano is a robust, sociable fish endemic to northern Australia that grows really quickly and tastes great, making it an ideal candidate for adapting to our aquaculture environments," said Dr. Polly Hilder, lead scientist. "We're bringing a new species to Australian plates to give consumers more options while opening up new export opportunities to strengthen Australia's white-flesh fish industry. We're now working to scale production processes in commercial trials with industry."



CSIRO is introducing a new white-flesh fish, pompano, for Australian aquaculture that could boost the economy by \$1 billion. Photo courtesy of CSIRO.

Early market testing has highlighted the pompano's culinary appeal, with chefs praising its versatility, ease of preparation and great taste, according to a study by Fishtales. The fish's potential will take center stage at AgCatalyst2024, where Andy Allen, *MasterChef Australia* judge and co-owner of Three Blue Ducks, will showcase its qualities in a live cooking demonstration.




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While many attempts to farm Florida pompano have fallen short, Joe Cardenas is undaunted, confident that recirculating aquaculture systems are the key.



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CSIRO is working with industry partners to fast-track the pompano's entry into the mainstream market, aiming to establish a sustainable Australian white-flesh fish industry. This initiative seeks to diversify the seafood market while reducing the nation's reliance on imported fish, paving the way for a resilient and sustainable aquaculture sector.

"We're applying innovative circular economy approaches designed around welfare that make use of resources end-to-end – from capturing value from production processes, through to utilizing the whole fish at the consumer end," Hilder said. "For example, fish waste is high in phosphorous and nitrogen nutrients and can be turned into valuable byproducts such as fertilizer capsules."

According to CSIRO's National Protein Roadmap, the industry's goal of producing 50,000 tonnes of white-flesh fish could generate over 1,000 jobs in Australia. This initiative is part of CSIRO's broader effort to develop sustainable protein solutions to meet growing global demand. CSIRO's extensive aquaculture research spans breeding and genomics, as well as health, nutrition and production processes, ensuring a comprehensive approach to advancing the industry.

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