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New Zealand government backs mussel spat project to grow aquaculture sector

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By Responsible Seafood Advocate

Greenshell mussel spat project expected to improve survival rates and help triple aquaculture sales revenue by 2035

The New Zealand government is investing in a project to boost the survival rates of New Zealand mussels and grow the mussel aquaculture industry, Oceans and Fisheries Minister Shane Jones has announced. The project will develop an innovative nursery culture system that will foster spat through their most vulnerable stage.

“This project seeks to increase the resilience of our mussels and significantly boost the sector’s productivity,” said Jones.

The industry largely relies on wild-caught spat, which has extremely low survival rates. Less than 5 percent of wild-caught spat survives after being transferred to mussel farms, forgoing millions in lost production each year. This project aims to grow spat to a robust size before they are transferred.



A government-backed greenshell mussel spat project is expected to improve survival rates and help triple aquaculture sales revenue by 2035. Photo by QFSE Media, via Wikimedia Commons.

“Significant areas of consented mussel farming space are vacant, in part due to the spat supply issue,” said Jones. “This project will address those spat supply issues which are severely restricting the productivity and growth of the industry in New Zealand.”



(<https://link.chtbl.com/aquapod>).

The government is co-investing \$410,000 (U.S. \$241,000) over three years in the \$1.04 million (U.S. \$613,000) project, which will be led by the Marine Farming Association in partnership with the University of Auckland, Coromandel Marine Farmers’ Association, Aquaculture New Zealand, Greenshell Spat Co. and Sanford.

“This project could be key to a more sustainable industry and has the potential to lift the sales revenue of our mussels by tens of millions of dollars per year,” said Jones.

The government's aquaculture strategy aims to triple aquaculture sales revenue to \$3 billion by 2035. This includes boosting greenshell mussel earnings to \$1 billion per year.

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