

Science Benchmarking: Aquaculture

Governing authority: Cost Recovery Implementation Committee (CRIC)

Agency: Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA)

Agency responsibility: Executive Director Fisheries and Aquaculture (PIRSA)

1. Background

The **Cost Recovery Implementation Committee (CRIC)** was formed to implement the recommendations of the Independent Cost Recovery Review Panel. Science benchmarking was a recommendation of this review to ensure that science activities (i.e. environmental assessment and monitoring) and costs are transparent, risk-based and aligned with best practice.

The **South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI)** serves as the government's science provider for the aquaculture sector.

Science is critical in ensuring aquaculture sectors are managed based on the best available scientific data. The costs associated with this must be fair, risk-based and transparent.

Section 8(1)(c) of the *Aquaculture Act 2001* prescribes the efficient and effective regulation of the aquaculture industry.

The Terms of Reference sets out the objectives, scope, and deliverables of the science benchmarking process for aquaculture within South Australia.

The goal is to ensure SARDI delivers efficient and cost-effective services without compromising science quality.

2. Objectives

This benchmarking exercise seeks to ensure the appropriateness and cost-effectiveness of science services across aquaculture as a whole, and at the individual sector level.

The primary objectives of the Aquaculture Science Benchmarking process are to:

1. **Evaluate current science frameworks** and cost structures within the aquaculture sectors to determine if these are appropriate, risk-based and effective.
2. Ensure science costs are **transparent** and aligned with best practice.

3. **Identify efficiencies** in current activities and future opportunities for modernisation, particularly through innovation and new approaches to aquaculture and monitoring.
4. **Ensure Compliance with Legislation.** Confirm that SARDI service provision aligns with the requirements of the *Aquaculture Act 2001*, where the aquatic resources of the State are to be managed in an efficient and cost effective manner.

3. Scope and Process

The Aquaculture Science Benchmarking will include:

- **Sector Review:** The initial benchmarking phase will focus on the aquaculture sector as a whole, and then identifying individual sector needs for the oyster, mussel, yellowtail kingfish, southern bluefin tuna and abalone aquaculture sectors.
- **Review of Current Science Program:** Assessing the effectiveness, efficiency, and cost structure of existing aquaculture science programs delivered by SARDI, including environmental monitoring, and supporting science. Determine if the current science activities are appropriate, risk-based and effective across the aquaculture sectors.
- **Technology Integration:** Identifying opportunities to integrate modern technologies into science activities to improve outcomes.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Where required, consulting with key stakeholders, including aquaculture lease and licence holders, commercial industry bodies, science organisations, and PIRSA, to identify science priorities, and improvements without compromising scientific integrity or sustainability goals.
- **Benchmarking with External Jurisdictions and Peers:** Comparing science frameworks with other jurisdictions and international standards to ensure competitiveness, adoption of best practices, and cost-efficiency.

Exclusions:

- Food safety: SASQAP (PIRSA South Australia Shellfish Quality Assurance Program).
- Inland aquaculture activities and seaweed.
- Aquaculture Zone Policies.

In achieving this task, the Contractor will be required to:

- Engage with PIRSA, including SARDI, to identify the data, information, reports and policies necessary to undertake the review and analysis.
- If deemed necessary by the Contractor, undertake consultation with technical experts familiar with science cost recovery models used for aquaculture.
- Provide options that align with the principles of risk-catch-cost that promote best practice and identify opportunities for improvement to both industry and PIRSA within the current regulatory framework.

- Consult (online or face-to-face) with the aquaculture sector and relevant government agencies, as required.
- Maintain full records of all activities undertaken by the Contractor.
- Regular updates will be required by the Contractor to the CRIC.

PIRSA will provide relevant background information, any additional relevant information requested by the Contractor where such information exists, and access to PIRSA's files regarding relevant matters.

A draft report to be presented to the CRIC by 14 March 2025, subject to all necessary data and information being provided to the Contractor in a timely manner.

Following CRIC feedback on the draft report, a final report to be provided by 11 April 2025.

4. Confidentiality

All documents and other materials used and produced by the Contractor in the course of its activities remain the property of PIRSA.