



# Aquaculture investment opportunities in the Goldfields-Esperance region



## Regional overview

The Goldfields-Esperance region is vast, the largest in Western Australia. It covers an expansive 771,276km<sup>2</sup>, just under a third of WA's total land mass.

The southern coastal areas, encompassing the Shires of Esperance, Ravensthorpe and Dundas, feature long white sand beaches and high granite headlands. In the east toward the South Australian border, there are long beaches backed by large sand dunes and an extensive length of high limestone cliffs.

Esperance is the main population hub and service centre along the coast. It is home to the deepest port in southern Australia. Other coastal settlements include Hopetoun in the Shire of Ravensthorpe and Eucla, located near the South Australian border.

The Shires of Esperance, Ravensthorpe and Dundas fall into the South Coast Bioregion. Fish stocks in this region are predominantly temperate, with many species' distributions extending right across southern Australia.

## Regional advantages for aquaculture

The south-east coast is recognised internationally as a high-quality, clean marine environment, with minimal pollutants and strong biosecurity integrity. This has long supported an established wild capture seafood industry.

The protection of the aquatic environment through monitoring, aquatic animal health programs and zoning requirements ensures high standards while offering certainty and quality assurances for industry and investors. The region, known for its pristine waters and astonishing variety of marine life, has a range of potential sites along its extensive coastline that offer consistent water quality and temperature. These natural features mean the region is well placed to host and efficiently produce a range of seafood.

In addition, Esperance and the south-east coast has an established marine operations capability, including personnel, expertise, services and infrastructure, able to support sustainable aquaculture industry growth and development. Esperance Port provides an excellent, strategically-located export gateway to overseas markets and allows for full produce traceability.

## Investment opportunities

The region is well positioned to further develop and expand both marine and land-based aquaculture production, thus diversifying national production away from the eastern states.

Leveraging the region's natural advantages, the potential exists to significantly increase aquaculture exports to meet rising demand from growing middle classes, particularly in Asia, for premium, high-quality, traceable seafood products.

Baseline research has been completed which indicates there is strong potential to expand the shellfish aquaculture sector.



**Greenlip abalone** (Source: Ocean Grown Abalone)

Esperance is already home to an emerging shellfish aquaculture industry. Wylie Bay Abalone is a joint venture abalone ranching project located in Wylie Bay, Esperance operated by Ocean Grown Abalone and Ocean King Fishing. Through the construction of purpose-built artificial abalone reefs, Ocean Grown Abalone produces commercial-scale quantities of premium, 'wild-harvested', greenlip abalone.

Ocean Grown Abalone is also presently examining the feasibility of a potential large-scale, land-based abalone hatchery and grow-out facility in Esperance to supply both domestic and international markets.

With established aquaculture production, there is substantial scope for further large-scale investment in the sector. In addition to expanded aquaculture production, opportunities exist in retail and wholesale trading, marine and food tourism, warehousing, processing/value-adding, distribution, education and research and development.

## Supporting aquaculture development

Encouraging and facilitating investment in sustainable aquaculture has been identified by the Goldfields-Esperance Development Commission (GEDC) as critical to leveraging the region's natural comparative advantage in seafood production (Goldfields-Esperance Regional Investment Blueprint, 2016).

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), with support from the GEDC, has recently completed a series of investigations designed to identify additional areas suitable for large-scale marine aquaculture projects along WA's South Coast. As a result of these investigations, a number of suitable locations for sustainable, low-impact commercial shellfish aquaculture around Esperance have been identified as being of high interest.

DPIRD is undertaking work to create the South Coast Aquaculture Development Zone, which will provide an 'investment ready' platform for marine-based shellfish aquaculture ventures. Establishing the zone will reduce environmental approval times, cut cost and red tape and support future aquaculture initiatives by commercial operators.

### Further information

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