

Oysters Tasmania Strategic Plan 2023 to 2028

The constitution of Oysters Tasmania establishes the organisation as a not-for-profit advocacy and research body that is managed by a board of directors and that serves its members, namely holders of marine farm licences covering Pacific oysters, including hatchery operators, who have paid the industry levy associated with such licences.

The board of directors has set the following vision for Oysters Tasmania:

To grow a sustainably profitable, innovative and robust industry, populated by high quality people, grounded in the provenance of Tasmania.

- *A growing industry attracts support.*
- *An innovative industry drives its own RD&E priorities including with respect to breeding.*
- *A robust industry prepares for, responds to, and learns from crisis, and supports individuals facing challenges that can befall any industry members.*
- *An industry populated with high-quality people shares information, invests in training and professional development, and attracts new people to the industry.*
- *An industry grounded in the provenance of Tasmania boosts demand for Tasmania's unique offering by creating its own brand.*

The board of directors has agreed to the following strategic plan to achieve this vision over the period from mid-2023 to mid-2028.

The board of directors intends to agree to annual operating plans for each year of the strategic plan, and to evaluate the success of each annual operating plan.

The board of directors intends to continually assess whether revisions to the strategic plan are warranted, and to assess the overall success of the strategic plan in 2028.

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Industry overview

Indigenous Tasmanians have been maintaining, harvesting, and enjoying native Angasi oysters for millenia. Oyster reefs are a natural part of our coastline, and Aboriginal middens (concentrations of shell, bone, botanical remains, ash, and charcoal) can be found all around Tasmania's coast.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s the precursor to CSIRO introduced Pacific oysters to numerous estuaries in Tasmania. Pacific oysters quickly became a self-sustaining feature of Tasmania's estuaries.

In the 1970s Pacific oyster farming in Tasmania began, drawing on the now-entrenched wild Pacific oyster population. There are now more than 40 oyster farmers, all 100 per cent Australian owned, located in Tasmania's North West, East Coast and the South, employing around 350 Tasmanians, and producing around \$40 million worth of oysters annually. The great majority of these oysters are Pacific oysters, with some farmers also growing Angasi oysters. Growers acquire baby oysters (spat) from hatcheries, which are offered brood stock by a grower-owned breeding company.

Tasmanian oyster farmers pay more than \$1 million in industry-specific fees and levies to the State Government, and ensure that Tasmanian oysters are always available to Tasmanians.

Oyster farming is sustainable, low impact farming. Oyster farmers put nothing in their baskets and trays except oysters: in these baskets and trays our oysters get all their nutrition from the natural environment. As filter feeders, oysters help maintain the health of our estuaries and coastal waters. Oyster farms provide habitat for other species, supporting a multi-species ecology. Oyster farmers do regular shore clean-ups, with most of the rubbish we collect being urban waste.

Oyster farming is climate friendly. Oysters sequester carbon in their shells. Farming oysters involves lower greenhouse gas emissions than the farming of all other meat, fish, and crustaceans.

Oyster farmers produce a delicacy that is healthy and safe. Tasmanian oysters are a great source of protein, omega 3, iron and magnesium. Oyster farmers regularly test oysters and the waters they grow in to ensure that any oysters put on the market are safe to eat. Oyster farmers widely share their test results so that all Tasmanian seafood benefits.

With the right regulatory arrangements, the oyster farming industry can be a booming industry of which Tasmania can be proud, producing ever increasing numbers of our high-value, environmentally-friendly delicacy.

Tasmania has more coastline than New South Wales, but the value of oyster production in New South Wales is higher than in Tasmania. Turning this around should be a statewide priority.

Achieving a sustainably profitable and growing industry grounded in the provenance of Tasmania

Oysters Tasmania will achieve a sustainably profitable and growing industry. This will involve supporting demand, including by promoting the provenance of our oysters, reducing costs in a sustainable way, removing unwarranted constraints on expansion, and bolstering public support for the industry.

Measurement

Action item 1.

Oysters Tasmania will gather and track:

- volume and price measures over time of both mature oyster sales and oyster spat sales to outside Tasmania;
- key costs across the industry.

Action item 2.

Oysters Tasmania will assess and track support for the industry from government and residents.

Public support

Action item 3.

Oysters Tasmania will bolster support for the industry through engagement with parliamentarians, senior officials, media, and resident groups.

Scale of Tasmanian production

Action item 4.

Oysters Tasmania will increase the volume of mature oysters sold by ensuring regulatory limits on stocking are soundly based, reducing impediments to developing currently undeveloped waters that have regulatory approval for oyster farming, and maintaining and expanding the waters that have regulatory approval for oyster farming.

Maximising markets

Action item 5.

Oysters Tasmania will increase the volume of mature oysters sold outside Tasmania by:

- ensuring regulators continue existing market access;
- supporting regulatory approval for access to new markets of interest to Tasmanian growers; and
- facilitating support for growers seeking to break into new markets.

Oysters Tasmania will support the sale of oyster spat outside Tasmania by encouraging other jurisdictions to allow, or continue to allow, the transfer of Tasmanian spat to their waters.

Sustainably supporting demand and prices, including through our provenance

Action item 6.

Oysters Tasmania will create and promote a Tasmanian oyster brand.

Action item 7.

Oysters Tasmania will encourage the adoption of, enforcement of, and compliance with best-practice food safety regulation, both before and after the point that oysters leave the custody of growers, so as to minimise the possibility of food safety incidents where Tasmanian oysters are implicated, and to minimise the impact of any such incidents. Such incidents not only detract from demand but create significant costs such as recall costs. Oysters Tasmania will communicate to consumers, when appropriate, the strong food-safety practices of the industry.

Action item 8.

Oysters Tasmania will improve consumers' knowledge that their oyster is a Tasmanian oyster.

Achieving quality inputs and sustainably containing input costs

Action item 9.

Oysters Tasmania will improve access to finance and limit finance costs by encouraging regulatory change to bolster the property rights of growers.

Action item 10.

Oysters Tasmania will improve access to land bases and boat ramps through encouraging favourable local and state government planning decisions and processes.

Action item 11.

Oysters Tasmania will limit lease charges to the value of their alternative use, limit regulatory charges without compromising efficient regulation, and promote the efficient distribution of regulatory charges and compliance costs between growers, through engagement with growers and government.

Action item 12.

Oysters Tasmania will encourage and facilitate bulk-buying and industry-wide negotiations with suppliers where feasible to limit costs such as insurance, and waste management and recycling.

Action item 13.

Oysters Tasmania will improve the value to growers of the breeding program by:

- ensuring that breeding reflects what growers want; and
- by driving efficiency through its shareholding in the breeding company.

Sustainable profits through productivity improvement

Action item 14.

Oysters Tasmania will facilitate the provision to growers and regulators of better information about the natural environment and pollution, to facilitate improved farm management and to make area closures fewer, shorter, and more predictable.

Action item 15.

Oysters Tasmania will facilitate sustainable improvements in the natural environment, including the reduction of pollution, and will prosecute the case for compensation for continuing pollution.

Action item 16.

Oysters Tasmania will remove unwarranted regulatory impediments to practices that improve productivity and reliability.

Achieving an innovative industry

Oysters Tasmania will make the industry more innovative.

Action item 17.

Oysters Tasmania will ask growers, hatcheries/nurseries, and the breeding company, what new information, techniques and equipment they want. Oysters Tasmania will then facilitate the cost-effective creation of new information, techniques, and equipment requested by industry.

Action item 18.

Oysters Tasmania will facilitate the take up by industry of new information, techniques, and equipment.

Achieving a robust industry

Oysters Tasmania will make the industry more robust.

Action item 19.

Oysters Tasmania will:

- prepare for future crises;
- identify current crises affecting industry participants, individually and more broadly;
- assist industry participants to manage current crises; and
- assess whether its efforts were of assistance.

Achieving an industry populated with high-quality people

Oysters Tasmania will ensure the industry is populated with high-quality people.

Action item 20.

Oysters Tasmania will facilitate information sharing so that more industry participants having relevant knowledge, without impeding competition. Oysters Tasmania will facilitate industry training and professional development. Oysters Tasmania will facilitate the attraction of new people to the industry.