MEASO18
Marine Ecosystem Assessment of the Southern Ocean

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Martin Exel is the General Manager Environment and Policy with Austral Fisheries, where he's worked since 1997. Austral is one of the largest Australian wild-catch companies, with 3 vessels fishing for toothfish and icefish in the sub-Antarctic, and 10 vessels fishing for prawns in the Northern Prawn Fishery in the Gulf of Carpentaria, as well as one vessel in the Timor Reef Fish fishery. Austral Fisheries are the first, and currently only, fishing company globally to have fully offset their CO2 equivalent emissions for both their products and operations, as certified under the Australian Government National Carbon Offset Standard.

Martin is also a Board member of the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) with the University of Tasmania, since February 2011. He has held various roles in the seafood industry over the past 35 years, including as a Board member of the Commonwealth Fisheries Association from 2003 – 2014 (including as its' Chair from 2010 to 2013); the Chair of the international Coalition of Legal Toothfish Operators (COLTO) from its inception in 2003 until 2017. Prior to that, Martin was working in various fisheries resources management roles with Australian Commonwealth government fisheries management agencies from 1984 to 1997 (culminating as General Manager, Fisheries in AFMA from 1991 to 1997); and as a professional fisherman in both New Zealand and Australia from 1980 until 1984. Martin holds a Bachelor of Science, plus a Graduate Diploma in Fisheries Technology, and is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Fisheries' Needs from Science

Understanding the natural environment in the Southern Ocean is critical to the fishing industry, as well as humanity.

Scientific understanding of the complex dynamics in the Southern Ocean is vital for our planning, future operations, and sustainability of production. From a fisheries perspective though, we need to ensure that science can be relevant, timely, regional, and often very specific in nature - which can pose problems with many focussed on large scale modelling and scientific assessments.

Industry is keen to collect data, provide observations, and participate directly in scientific programs such as via ships of opportunity. But to avoid past mistakes, that should ideally occur within a framework of data plans, clear guidelines to ensure that the data collected (often at great cost) is of suitable quality, standards, and utility, and feedback mechanisms. It is also critical those data can be stored effectively in a repository (such as IMOS) for use by multiple researchers and requirements.

To help demonstrate some specific examples of our needs, I will show some of our 'citizen science' approaches we utilise to try and understand and assess very regional issues; and outline some of the frustrations of working to fit what many would consider to be 'micro-scale' problems, into a 'mega-scale' scientific program. Without good science, there can be no sustainable seafood production. How to best work together to ensure that can occur, is the challenge.