The Fishing Industry Emissions Calculator: A Trawl Fishers Perspective

The QSIA, in conjunction with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), held a series of workshops in Townsville and Gladstone in late 2009 to trial a fishing industry-based emissions calculator designed to assist fishers with their business planning.

Karen and Tony Collard attended the Townsville workshop and they agreed to trial the calculator and share their experience using the calculator.

By Tony and Karen Collard

WE are a family-operated business working in the East Coast trawl fishery mostly catching prawns and bugs. We generally work south of Cairns to north of Bowen from our home port of Townsville.

We have one primary vessel (18.3 metres) with a main engine: a Caterpillar 3406TA diesel producing 350 hp with a 4.5:1 reduction gearbox and 48-inch propeller and nozzle. The auxiliary is a four-cylinder turbo Isuzu diesel used for all power supply, including compressor for the freezer room. We use a stand-alone diesel cooker. All diesel on board is stored in bulk tanks and used for all applications. We have always used a quad net configuration when fishing.

Tony has spent most of his life working in the fishing industry and is away about 200 days a year at sea. Karen manage the administrative side of the business using standard business accounting procedures.

Our total catch in 2008-09 was approximately 30,000 kg. Using the calculator, we found that our current emissions are 11 kg of carbon dioxide (CO_2) per kilogram of catch.

Why use the calculator?

We recognised that so many external factors (such as government agencies, industry bodies, fuel suppliers, buyers and, in future, some kind of Emissions Trading Scheme) drive our industry and sometimes it seems to be so hard to set the agenda in our own business.

We both saw the calculator as a way to get involved early to help us to understand and measure our current emissions. We wanted to find out how we could help our business by reducing our emissions and to see how our emissions stack up compared with other fishing sectors and food producers.

We see the fishing industry as "our industry" and we are keen to see it move forward. To do this means we all need to be involved in the management and running of our fisheries and also to be focused on improving each of our individual businesses.

The Collard's Trawler, "Fiora".

During February and through to April this year, the QSIA and GBRMPA will be holding a series of workshops in major ports to explain how to use the calculator and what benefit it can bring to your business. These sessions will be open to all people who run a business in the fishing industry.

More details will be available soon. In the meantime, for further information, contact:

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Is it easy to use?

Yes. We simply identified what we wanted the assessment to cover and then collected information from our business records. It was good to know that the calculator could be used as a simple tool on estimated numbers or could be used in a very detailed breakdown of business components depending on what we wanted to achieve.

What business changes have we already made?

To reduce fuel costs, we had already changed our nets from Markwell Blue 27 ply to Euro Gold Premium 1mm, and replaced our traditional otter boards with four-fin louvre otter boards. We estimate these changes have reduced our fuel consumption by 30 to 40 litres per night.

We also get a Caterpillar engine mechanic to tune the main engine annually and to provide advice on best operational practice to reduce fuel use. Our next energy saving measure will be to install a fuel flow meter.

What did we know about climate change before we started?

We were broadly aware of issues raised in the general media but we had not really thought about what climate change impacts might mean for our actual business. This has just reinforced for us how important it is to position ourselves to be able to deal with any changes we might face in the future – regardless of what they are – by being

Tony and Karen Collard.

smart about trimming costs and looking for efficiencies and ways to increase profitability.

Where to from here?

Rising fuel costs have driven big changes in how we manage our business – what we did not realise was that we were also reducing our emissions at the same time. Now that we are more aware, we will be starting to think about more "intentional" business planning – where energy savings can be made and where there are opportunities for promoting "buying green" and "buying local".

As we worked through this process, it raised several questions for us:

- ❑ How can we work as a more united group to look at the emissions footprint for the trawl fleet?
- ❑ What does our baseline look like compared with other primary producers?
- ❑ How do we access rebates and resources to reduce our carbon footprint?
- ❑ How do we influence policy for our sector to ensure that it takes account of our carbon footprint and doesn't unintentionally increase it?
- ❑ What promotional benefits might exist in the fact that the GBR Marine Park is recognised as a well managed ecosystem?
- ❑ Is it possible for green zones to be seen as some kind of carbon offset (like farmers can plant trees) that can be recognised when fishers are measuring and trying to reduce their carbon footprint on an ongoing basis?