

SEAFOOD CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION LIMITED



SEAFOOD CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION (SCA)

SUBMISSION TO THE MURRAY-DARLING BASIN PLAN REVIEW 2026

REFRAMING THE EUROPEAN CARP RESPONSE

FROM VIRUS DEPENDENCY TO A FRESHWATER BIOECONOMY

Remove biomass. Restore rivers. Build food security. Create regional jobs. Strengthen communities.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

European Carp are a major ecological challenge in the Murray-Darling Basin, with biomass dominance in some regions reaching **80-90%** of total fish.

Relying on a **virus alone** is uncertain, risky and incomplete. It does not remove biomass, create jobs, feed communities or build a long-term industry.

SCA proposes a multi-pathway strategy anchored by a Freshwater Aquatic Food Centre of Excellence (FAFCoE) to turn a persistent problem into lasting public value.



CONTROL

Healthy rivers & ecosystems



UTILISATION

Food, products & circular value



REGIONAL RENEWAL

Jobs, skills & strong communities



THE POLICY PROBLEM: A NARROW RESPONSE



Carp increase turbidity, disturb sediments, damage vegetation and dominate fish biomass in parts of the Basin.



A "silver bullet" virus solution is uncertain, does not eradicate carp and may lead to survivors with immunity.



Even if a virus worked, it does not create removal capacity, processing, markets, food or regional industry.



Australia faces a policy gap: we have a biomass problem – but no strategy to use it productively.

RISKS OF A VIRUS-LED STRATEGY



ECOLOGICAL RISK

Mass fish deaths can cause oxygen depletion, ammonia spikes and secondary fish kills.



SYSTEM SHOCK RISK

Disrupts food webs, removes prey for native species and risks public backlash (smell, water quality, visual impacts).



ETHICAL & SOCIAL LICENCE RISK

Virus causes prolonged suffering (1-2 weeks). Raises animal welfare concerns and can impact worker mental health and public trust.

THE MISSED OPPORTUNITY: CARP AS A RESOURCE



GLOBAL REALITY

Carp is the 3rd most farmed fish globally and a valued food in Europe and Asia.



AUSTRALIAN MISCONCEPTION

"Inedible pest" is a cultural, not biological problem. Quality handling, processing and product innovation can change perceptions.



UNTAPPED VALUE STREAMS

Food products, pet food, aquafeed, fertiliser, soil enhancers, collagen and extractives.



WHY HARVEST & UTILISATION WORK

- ✓ Target large fish (4-5 kg+) to remove the biggest breeders and millions of eggs.
- ✓ Manage habitat & hydrology to reduce breeding opportunities.
- ✓ Open access and operational flexibility for carp-specific harvest.
- ✓ Strong markets and innovation turn biomass into economic value.
- ✓ Biomass removed = less damage, more benefit.

THE SOLUTION: FRESHWATER AQUATIC FOOD CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE (FAFCoE)

A NATIONAL PLATFORM TO REMOVE CARP BIOMASS, RESTORE RIVERS, BUILD INDUSTRY AND DELIVER PUBLIC VALUE



1 BIOMASS REMOVAL & PRODUCT INNOVATION



Sustainable harvest, processing R&D and development of food, feed, fertiliser and value-added products.



2 NATIVE AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT



Scale native species aquaculture (Murray cod, silver perch and others) to build a strong, local freshwater industry.



3 PUBLIC FOOD PROCUREMENT PATHWAYS



Direct suitable freshwater aquatic products into schools, hospitals, aged care and community programs.



4 REGIONAL TRAINING & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



Build skills and jobs in processing, quality assurance, cold-chain, logistics and business entrepreneurship.



5 RESEARCH, MONITORING & CIRCULAR SYSTEMS



Applied research in ecology, aquatic plants, integrated systems and circular-economy uses for biomass.

DELIVERING REAL BENEFITS FOR AUSTRALIA



REGIONAL JOBS & ECONOMIC GROWTH

New processing facilities, SMEs, supply chains and export opportunities across the Basin.



FOOD SECURITY & NUTRITION

Affordable, healthy protein for Australians and reduced reliance on imported seafood (~70% currently).



HEALTH & WELLBEING OF COMMUNITIES

Better nutrition pathways and local jobs support stronger, healthier inland communities.



ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES

Biomass removal, habitat improvement and better water quality deliver healthier rivers.



VALUE FROM WASTE

Circular economy turns what is currently a cost into a resource with many uses.

AUSTRALIA ALREADY WORKS INLAND – WE CAN DO IT BETTER

- ✓ International success: Carp is a delicacy and major food fish in Europe and Asia.
- ✓ Australian capability: World-leading research, innovative processors and strong aquaculture experience.
- ✓ Time to scale up: From small pilots to a coordinated national freshwater bioeconomy.



ALIGNMENT WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



2 ZERO HUNGER

Food security & nutrition for all



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Jobs, enterprise & regional growth



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Innovation, industry & resilient infrastructure



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Sustainable use of biomass & circular economy



14 LIFE BELOW WATER

Healthy freshwater ecosystems



15 LIFE ON LAND

Restore & protect terrestrial ecosystems



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Multi-stakeholder partnerships

A BETTER QUESTION

“The question before Australia is not simply: **“HOW DO WE KILL CARP?”**”

It is: **“HOW DO WE REMOVE BIOMASS, RESTORE RIVERS, CREATE JOBS AND BUILD A FRESHWATER FOOD SYSTEM FOR THE FUTURE?”**”



RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MURRAY-DARLING BASIN PLAN REVIEW



Adopt a multi-pathway carp strategy



Establish a Freshwater Aquatic Food Centre of Excellence (FAFCoE)



Invest in harvesting, processing, market development and infrastructure



Develop public procurement pathways for freshwater aquatic products



Build partnerships with government, industry, research and Indigenous communities



KILLING CARP IS NOT THE PLAN. BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE IS.

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- Food products (fresh, processed, ingredients)
- Pet food and feed inputs
- Fertiliser and agricultural products
- Collagen and extractive industries

Recent initiatives, including FRDC-supported campaigns promoting Carp consumption, indicate a growing recognition of this opportunity.

This is not just about Carp.

It is about building a new inland aquatic food system.

6. Proposed Solution: Freshwater Aquatic Food Centre of Excellence

Despite over \$20 billion in Basin-related investment, ecological recovery has not met expectations, reinforcing the need for new approaches.

SCA proposes establishment of a Freshwater Aquatic Food Centre of Excellence (FAFCoE).

The Centre would:

- Integrate biomass removal with water quality improvement
- Build regional processing capability
- Support native aquaculture development
- Enable public procurement pathways
- Develop workforce and skills
- Provide scientific oversight and monitoring

This represents a system-level solution, not a single intervention.

These outcomes align closely with national policy priorities and with the strategic direction of both DAFF and FRDC, which emphasise innovation, market development, and the role of aquatic foods in supporting health and wellbeing.

Earlier this week FRDC have financed through PR company, Papaya, the 'Two4Life' campaign featuring European Carp within a Seafood Nutrition Toolkit.

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Photo – from the Channel 9 Today program 28 April 2026 - <https://youtu.be/XQxmiTQoBRs?si=jLciE61ZBxq5Acnd>

7. Economic, Social and Food Security Benefits

A freshwater bioeconomy delivers:

Economic

- Regional industries and processing capacity
- SME development
- Reduced reliance on imports

Social

- Jobs and skills
- Community resilience
- Indigenous engagement opportunities

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