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Development of a New South Wales tilapia incursion response plan: failure to plan is a plan to fail

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Abstract:

Mozambique Tilapia (*Oreochromis mossambicus*), commonly called Tilapia, are one of the world's worst invasive fish species impacting native fauna at a global scale (Lowe et al, 2004). The life cycle traits of Tilapia that ensure their success as a pest also make them a successful species for aquaculture, with Tilapia now classed as the most important aquaculture fish of the 21st century (Shelton, 2002). In Australia, wild populations of Tilapia were first detected in Queensland in the 1970s and spread rapidly across many Queensland inland and coastal waterways. Once established, Tilapia are nearly impossible to eradicate from a waterway. Most, if not all, Tilapia translocations in Australia occur through human movements (Ovenden et al, 2014). This finding suggests targeted communication and advisory efforts are the best tools available for controlling further spread of Tilapia. In December 2014, the first NSW population of Tilapia was confirmed in Cudgen Lake. NSW Department of Primary Industries is responding to this incursion with targeted communication efforts and the development of a NSW Tilapia Incursion Response Plan. This presentation outlines the risks Tilapia pose to NSW aquatic ecology, considers future management options across NSW and highlights the need for a national strategy to manage this threat to the Murray Darling Basin and its high value native fish.