

# Nova Austral will initiate a trial run of its hatchery/freshwater fish farm in Magallanes at the end of 2018

By Jonathan Garcés Salmonexpert  
Translated to English by Christy Ward

With the concessions that it has today, Nova Austral, [the only antibiotic free salmon production operation in the Strait of Magellan], can produce up to 35,000 tons of salmon in Magallanes, [the 12th and southernmost Region in Chile]. But, this is only possible when the coordination of the fallow periods is perfect, so, consequently, in the long term, the company plans a production of 30,000 tons per year.

In order to have a complete production cycle in Magallanes, the company is building its own hatchery/freshwater fish farm, [a site to raise eyed eggs to smolt in freshwater], with an investment of over US\$30 million. The CEO of Nova Austral, Nicos Nicolaides, told Salmonexpert that the project “is advancing very well and according to plan. A large portion of the tanks are visible, around 50% have already been installed, [and] the same goes for the biofilters. We are beginning to install the first storage buildings.”

The executive expressed that, “we are thinking of putting in the first eggs during the last few months of 2018, despite the fact that the final stages of the hatchery/freshwater fish farm will be completely finished in the middle of the next year. The initial batch will be less than 50% of the normal [quantity] so that we can do a sort of trial run, in order to thoroughly test all the systems. The professionals who constitute the foundation of the team have already been contracted. We hope that the smolts will be sent to the sea [farms] in the 4th trimester of 2019.”

The hatchery/freshwater fish farm is designed to produce 1,650 tons of biomass a year. In practice, this translates to 12 million 130 gram smolts or 10 million 165 gram smolts a year. The company is exploring the possibility of producing a lower number of smolts, but larger in size, for example, 7.5 million 220 gram [smolts per year].

“This could be very positive, especially in winter, when, due to the glacial water temperatures that feed us (5°C), the growth in the sea is slower and more robust fish are necessary”, added Nicolaides.

The CEO of Nova Austral admitted “that is more than our company currently stocks, therefore, we already have a dialogue going with our colleagues in Magallanes about supplying us with smolts and this way, we avoid transporting [smolts] from the Lake Region [of Chile].”

## Communities

How has the company previously worked with the communities regarding this project? The executive declared that the hatchery/freshwater fish farm conducted many activities, especially in Porvenir, during the processing of the Environmental Impact Statement.

Given the special nature of the initiative and those of its smolt production process by means of water recirculation, “the emissions are very well controlled.”

“For this reason, it obtained a positive Environmental Qualification Resolution for the Hatchery/Freshwater Fish Farm Tierra del Fuego. This is especially important for our region, the Region of Magallanes, where the standard is stringent. I believe that our work plan with ASC helped us a lot, which has translated into the entire company constantly looking at environmental issues and their relation to the stakeholders”, explained Nicolaides.

“The most important thing is that the companies in the region are committed to transparent work and the advancement of the sustainability of activities in Magallanes. We believe that we have the conditions to be a global model, and we will all continue operating in that direction. We have no doubt that Aquachile will add itself to this huge sustainable aquaculture project”, Nicolaides stated.

Adding that, “because this is part of the normal way we operate, the community knows us and knows that we act in a transparent manner and that we are committed to sustainability. In other words, we don’t interact with interest groups and people in the respective area only when we seek the approval of a project, but, on an ongoing basis.”

