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NEW SEAFOOD RESEARCH CENTRE OPENS

Hon Dr Nick Smith, MP for Nelson, officially opened the new Nelson Research Centre for Plant & Food Research on Friday.

The new facility will provide office and laboratory space for 50 staff in the Seafood Technologies Portfolio of Plant & Food Research. The purpose-built facility is the first stage of a development by Port Nelson Limited to create a seafood precinct on the Akersten Street peninsula to the north of the city.

"The new facility will allow us to continue to deliver high quality science for the seafood industry and expand our research programme," says Helen Mussely, GM Science Seafood Technologies. "The new facilities at Akersten, including those already in place at our Maitai site next door, will enable us to work across the value chain, from understanding the genetics of fish through to how aquaculture practices or harvesting technologies impact on fish quality, to processing, food safety and understanding the molecules that can be extracted from our marine resources. The new building is purpose-built, so we've been able to really think about what resources we need both for now and for the future. It also provides us with an environment that promotes collaboration, both internally and with industry partners, which will support innovative thinking."

The combined facilities in the new Akersten Street building and Maitai site, opened in 2014, include eight laboratories and a finfish facility with tanks totalling 325,000 litres (approximately 1,400m^2), as well as collaboration and meeting spaces.

"The next decades will see a revolution in our seafood science, allowing us to get more information from the oceans, and sea flora and fauna, than ever before," says Alistair Jerrett, Science Group Leader Seafood Production. "This new facility has been designed to allow us to not only deliver our current research, but to consider how new and emerging technologies can be incorporated into our research programmes. One example is our new focus on fish genomics and how this technology, widely used across our institute in breeding plants, can be incorporated into our existing fish breeding programme to unlock some of the possibilities offered by our native seafood species."

"There is exciting potential in the marine extracts area, and the new facility will allow us to investigate deeper than previously possible," says Dr Susan Marshall, Science Group Leader Marine Products. "Having new laboratories designed for our research has allowed us to expand our facilities to include analytical and exploratory equipment for investigating the effects of marine molecules on living cells. It will also allow scientists from across our seafood research teams to come together and develop new programmes that incorporate different expertise and experiences that will add value to the seafood industry into the future."

The new facilities have been designed by Jerram Tocker Barron Architects with specialist laboratory designer LabWorks Architecture.