



FAST TRACK: The farm's yellowtail kingfish, a valuable species on export markets. Photo: Andre Bok

# South African land-based yellowtail farm sees 'unprecedented' growth rates

Ten years in the making, pilot farm is ready to take its fish to commercial-scale production.

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A pilot scale, land-based marine fish farm in East London, South Africa is growing yellowtail kingfish from egg to 2.5 kilos in an "unprecedented" 12 months, according to Aqua Management Systems' Andre Bok.

Production efficiencies at the farm, which is also producing dusky kob at proof-of-concept scale have "as far as we know, never before been experienced at any other land-based fish production facility anywhere else in the world," said Bok, who has been in the commercial aquaculture industry for over 20 years.



The farm was started in 2008 at a time when interest in land-based marine aquaculture was booming and investors were throwing

The farm's land-based facilities in East London, South Africa. Photo: Andre Bok

"large sums of money" at

various initiatives, Bok told **IntraFish**.



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"I was lucky enough to be involved in one of these projects, but insisted on a proof-of-concept pilot phase to empirically prove the business fundamentals prior to commercializing the investment."

At the same time, a number of other commercial scale marine fish farms were constructed around the country and operated for a few years.

Over this period, development finance institutions were lured in as commercial partners and there was a great amount of excitement at the creation of a new sub-sector of the South

African aquaculture industry.

However, as plans turned out to be less than fool-proof, investors were burned and finance is no longer so easy to come by, Bok said.



Andre Bok has a 20-year history in the aquaculture industry. Photo: Randell Roskrug

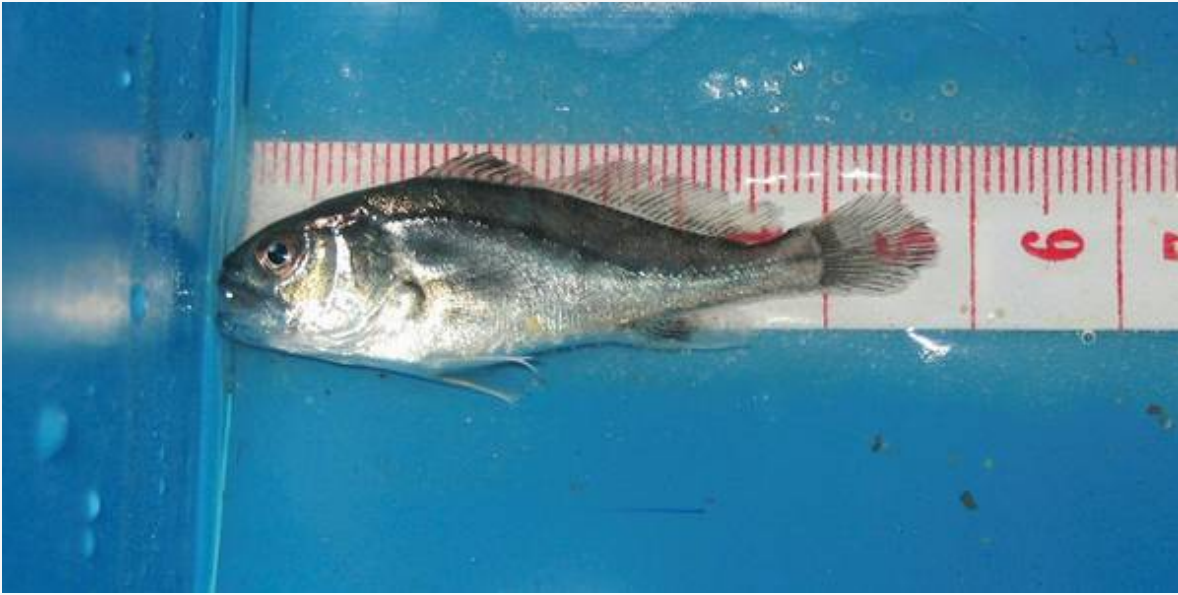
But, despite the financial difficulties experienced by the pioneering fish farming facilities in the East London Industrial

Development Zone, their technical achievements are proving to be industry-leading internationally, said Bok, who has been committed to proving commercially viable growth rates, FCRs and stocking densities in land-based aquaculture systems for the last 10 years.

The farm's dusky kob (*Argyrosomus japonicus*) is being grown from egg, spawned by on-site brood fish, to an average size of 1 kilo in a period of 12 months, with no growth hormones, antibiotics or any other chemicals, Bok told **IntraFish** -- "Just good food and good health."

Its yellowtail kingfish (*Seriola lalandii*) is being grown from spawned eggs to an average size of 2.5 kilos in 12 months at a temperature of 21.5 degrees Celsius and feeding efficiencies that "rival the production efficiencies of the cage-based fish farming sector."

"We had many production challenges over the past 10 years, which were all reflected in slow or stagnant fish growth and high animal grade-out rates," said Bok.



Dusky kob at 52 days old. Photo: Andre Bok

“The

breakthrough came with a prescribed feed formulation and careful feed application. The results were almost too good to be true.”

Based on these successes, Aqua Management Systems has attracted an investment commitment to commercialize its operation.

Although the advances have not yet been proven at a commercial scale, "with these types of growth performances, the commercial scale farming of these species will be economically viable," said Bok. "International markets beckon."

Indeed, the company is so confident what it has achieved is industry leading, it is offering a reward of \$1,000 (€815.70) to the first person that can provide proven fish growth performance indices achieved in land-based live-holding systems anywhere else in the world that beat what they have achieved.