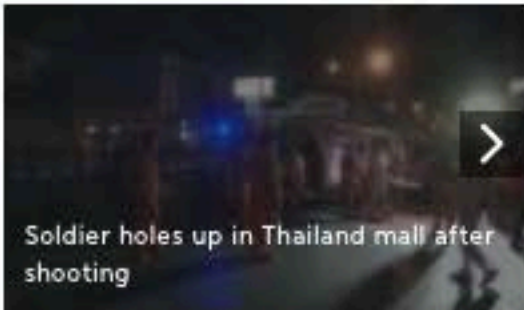
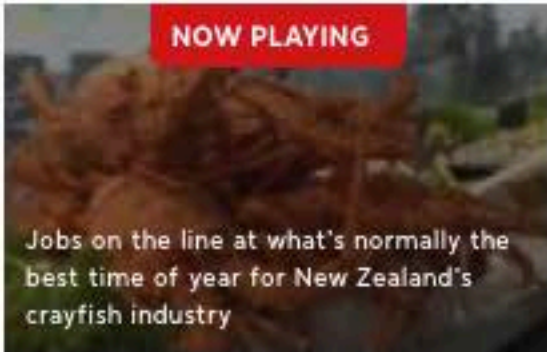


Crayfish fishers will be allowed to return some stock to the wild, after Chinese export orders were cancelled in the wake of the coronavirus crisis.



The coronavirus outbreak in China is causing our Aotearoa's crayfish to be locked out. Source: 1 NEWS

Up to 180 tonnoes of live rock lobster is being held in pots and tanks, at sea and land, after orders were cancelled.

"I have agreed that fisheries officials can allow a limited release of rock lobster back into the wild," Fisheries Minister Stuart Nash said.

"The decision will affect the live crayfish in holding pots at sea, and some held in tanks on land. It means they can be harvested again when the trade disruptions are resolved.



READ MORE
Jobs on the line in New Zealand's crayfish industry as coronavirus spreads

"The coronavirus is taking a big toll on ordinary Chinese people. Millions of people cannot go about their usual routines because of the need to minimise health risks and observe restrictions on movements and gatherings.

"The Chinese New Year celebrations between 25 January and 8 February are particularly affected. Exporters from New Zealand and other countries traditionally sell large numbers of rock lobster into China during this period, but most orders have been cancelled."

Not all lobster will be able to be released, and the industry will be expected to find new markets to sell excess stock.

Consideration will also be given to changing catch entitlements for the next fishery year.

The industry is worth \$320 million and employs more than 2000 people.

Prices are highest at this time of year, due to demand from Asia.

Last week, Iwi Collective Partnership's Maru Samuels told 1 NEWS there were fears for the industry as the crisis grew.