



THE UPDATE

Captain's Blog



Understanding the emergency - what COVID-19 means for the seafood industry

Forty eight hours into lockdown, with a State of Emergency now in force, the landscape for doing business has shifted seismically.

For New Zealand seafood producers, the decision to classify our work as an essential service is a privilege that should not be taken for granted. Whilst acknowledging that our industry supplies essential protein to many people in our local communities, this is an opportunity for us to do our bit, an opportunity we should be grateful for, and one that comes with significant responsibilities.

Seafood New Zealand is sending regular updates on the COVID-19 situation as it affects our industry and is here to support operators in any way. Our people are in regular contact with the agencies at the front line of the pandemic and, while working remotely, will be available 24/7.

Updates can be found at www.seafood.org.nz

This is a serious situation and the welfare of our people must be paramount. If they are still working in a factory or on a vessel, every measure to keep them safe must be implemented. Social distancing is critical. If they are working from home check on their mental wellbeing.

A reminder that by 5pm tonight, essential businesses must register with Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) so they can be assured that we are abiding by all necessary protocols. [Register here.](#)

MPI and the Minister have been very clear that this is about adapting our behaviour to combat COVID-19. This is not a box ticking exercise. If you cannot meet the requirements in the MPI guidance you cannot operate. MPI will undertake some verification and non-compliance will not be tolerated.

Industry should be aware that 200-300 MPI staff will be on the road working with companies to assess and refine this process.

Primary sector businesses may contact MPI at 0800 00 83 33 or info@mpi.govt.nz for further details on registering or the registration process.

These are the most unusual of times and we know that companies are scrambling to implement new procedures to ensure compliance with new rules.

Supplying New Zealand with fresh seafood in such circumstances is challenging. We recognise that. And we thank you.

If you still have questions, please don't hesitate to contact us: info@seafood.org.nz.

NZ food producers celebrated in a time of uncertainty

In a world that's a little topsy-turvy it's wonderful to have an opportunity to celebrate great New Zealand food.

Winners of the 2020 Outstanding NZ Food Producer Awards were announced earlier this week, with one seafood business in particular, dominating the 'Water' category.

Twenty-five judges and eight stewards worked in panels, assessing and recording 225 food and drink entries on March 7.

Entries were marked on aroma, appearance, taste, texture and quality, which accounted for 75 percent of the total score. Sustainability and the brand's story also formed part of the product's score.

Ngati Porou Seafoods made for strong competition in the 'Water' category, receiving gold for their Ahia brand freshly smoked Manuka honey Kahawai, silver for both their smoked gemfish & citrus spread and smoked trevally with horopito and pepper. Ahia brand shone again in the bronze category, earning medals for their freshly smoked hoki product, and hoki and saffron spread.

Genevieve's Mahurangi oyster mousse was the only other seafood product to place and achieve gold.

Fourth-year judge Lauraine Jacobs said it was exciting to see so many entries, all of which displayed great depth of innovation and attention to detail in production.

"The judging team welcomed back many long term producers and were pleased to note consistency and continued excellence in every aspect including presentation and sustainability, of our food," Jacobs said. "It was equally exciting to have the opportunity to examine many first time entries that were original, delicious and often inventive.

"I encourage food lovers to seek out the medal winners' products and show their support for our farmers and food producers by endeavouring to always buy local New Zealand produce when possible."

All Gold Medal winners are in contention for the Outstanding NZ Food Producer Awards Supreme Champion, Category Champion and Special Awards, which will be announced on Tuesday 21 April.



News

Fishing company Sealord is inviting people seeking work due to the Covid-19 pandemic to join them for the approaching hoki season, *Stuff* reported. Chief operating officer Doug Paulin said as a food producer, Sealord's factory and vessel operations could continue for the foreseeable future as an essential service. However, due to a lack of seasonal workers travelling to New Zealand, the Nelson-based company has been having difficulty filling roles for hoki season - its busiest time of year. Hoki is one of the most commercially valuable fisheries in New Zealand, with a market value of more than \$232 million. Sealord catches 30 percent of the hoki quota and employs more than 300 seasonal workers to fill temporary land-based factory roles and jobs on-board fishing vessels from May to September. Paulin said visitors on temporary work permits have traditionally made up the shortfall in the local workforce. "This year, we have been reaching out to other industries struggling to provide work for their staff," he says. "It's a good solution for all parties. We're looking for keen, reliable people and offering options for businesses impacted by covid-19 that want to hold on to their staff, but just don't have the work for them at the moment. Over the last few weeks, we've been in contact with the Chamber of Commerce, as well as representatives from the forestry, horticulture and hospitality industries," Paulin said. Sealord is looking for people with a range of skills, including good hand-eye coordination and the ability to stand in a production line for an eight-hour shift in the company's grading and packaging plant. There are two shifts available for these positions, a day and an afternoon rotation that starts at 4pm. Roles for forklift operators, commercial cleaners and

people with filleting experience are also available. Paulin said as a food manufacturing business, the company had high standards of care through health and safety practices. "Now we have introduced a raft of extra measures in response to Covid-19. "Just some of these include increasing physical distance between employees on the assembly line in our factories, severely restricting access to our site and carrying out health and travel screening of employees and new recruits before any fishing trips depart."

The coronavirus threat in New Zealand is 'like a bad horror film', fishers say, and they're heading to sea to get away from it, *Stuff* reported. Sanford Fisheries has been deemed an essential service during New Zealand's pending lockdown, and the fishers can't wait to get out to sea. On Tuesday Taylah Pilcher, a general hand on a fishing trawler, was waiting to board the Interislander to get to Timaru before all domestic travel was banned. "I never thought I'd be so happy to see work again," Pilcher said. Driving from the far north to Timaru where she will sail from had been daunting, she said. "I am on the luckier side, and I get to leave land and be away from this and do my own self-isolation." Pilcher said she would've wanted to have stayed on land, but now that the country is preparing for lockdown, she is eager to leave. "It's like a bad horror film," she said. "My job is basically my everything at the moment." She felt fortunate to be considered an essential worker in these times, she said. All those heading out to sea will be tested for the coronavirus before sailing. Until she goes, Pilcher said she must self-isolate. Six weeks away was a normal time to be out fishing, she said. If she returned in six weeks to find the country still in lockdown, Pilcher said she could stay on her boat for a break or go back out to sea. "Once we're on the boats, we're out there until the end of the lockdown," she said. "If the lockdown is still in place we'll go back out."

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