



# THE UPDATE

## Captain's Blog



### Industry focuses on recruitment

It is often said that a good crisis should not be wasted.

Recruiting more Kiwis into the seafood industry in a post-COVID world is currently a focus of Seafood New Zealand.

While the majority of the workforce are New Zealanders, there has traditionally been hard to fill positions in some areas, and with many Kiwis out of work because of the pandemic, targeting them to join the industry is timely.

The New Zealand seafood industry has been fortunate to be deemed an essential business during 2020 and has worked in sometimes difficult conditions to operate over the past few months.

Our people did us proud, however finding people to fill positions, particularly at sea, remains challenging. Life away from home for extended periods, physical work and passing drug and alcohol tests mean at-sea jobs are not for everyone, despite being well paid.

The industry was fortunate that the Government allowed some of our Ukrainian and Russian fishermen into the country to crew the BATM vessels that were left tied up because of crew shortages. These are specialised jobs, require long periods at sea and have been crewed by foreigners for decades. However, the industry had a very clear message from the Government that by allowing these crew in, we would have to make a concerted effort to transition to Kiwi crew in the future.

Sealord has been on the transitioning journey for years already. However, this is a capital-intensive business, requiring new vessels such as the state-of-the-art *Tokatu*, which is

better suited to New Zealand workers. At \$70 million a pop, new vessels are a major investment.

None-the-less, even inshore operations find recruitment difficult and a new advertising campaign by Seafood New Zealand hopes to bolster that recruitment.

With assistance from the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) through their 'Opportunities Grow Here' campaign, a series of online, digital and regionally focused advertisements are set to roll out next week.

Covering the gamut of deep sea, inshore, processing and aquaculture positions the ads will direct job seekers to the website, which will then link off to jobs in all companies and all sectors, as well as to seafood jobs on websites such as Seek and Trade Me jobs.

Market research shows many misperceptions about jobs in the industry, the most prevalent being that it is hard work for little money, which is rarely the case.

Deep sea positions start above \$50,000 for around seven months work and deep sea skippers can earn upwards of \$250,000.

Also not widely known, is that most of the major companies will pay for staff to attend training courses to gain tickets and progress up the ladder, an investment by the companies that pays big dividends for both parties.

As horticulture, dairy, forestry, fruit and wine will also attest, attracting Kiwis into the primary sector is not easy, but all efforts must be made.

And that will require a combination of factors; a transition to more attractive working conditions for New Zealanders and a change in attitude by some Kiwis to primary sector jobs.

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