

Seafood Industry leads the way - career pathways in EMS

With 130,000 workers and an annual production valued at \$2.4 billion a vibrant seafood industry is important to the regional and national economy. One initiative being actively pursued to maintain a healthy seafood industry is the adoption of environmental management systems by sectors and individual businesses.

The seafood industry is at the forefront of Australian primary industries in adopting principles of ecological sustainability. Mr Russ Neal, CEO of the Australian Seafood Industry Council says that the environmental management system, EMS, is the most valuable tool available to industry at this time for achieving ecological sustainability.

Where we have been:

Since 2002, industry and government have invested significant funds in the development and uptake of industry relevant EMS. The surge in interest and activity accelerated in 2003-04 due in part for the need for seafood businesses to comply with the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act. Additional pressure has come from consumer demand for guarantees that seafood product has come from an ecologically sustainability environment, and from seafood enterprises wanting secure resource access to assure the sustainability of their businesses in the long term.

The Need:

New job roles are emerging in the seafood industry that support the development of environmental management systems and their ongoing implementation in workplaces. For example there are currently 25 government supported projects in EMS underway around Australia in which facilitators are supporting seafood industry groups working on regional or enterprise EMS plans. Kellie Williams from University of Queensland is facilitating groups in Queensland in the Moreton Bay and Cairns regions. Kellie's contract ends in 2005. A similar story can be told for up to ten other EMS facilitators. With demand for the introduction of EMS's expected to significantly increase where will future seafood EMS facilitators come from?

Within seafood enterprises involved in EMS workers are applying sustainability processes in their daily work. Some workers are taking a leading role in developing group EMS plans. In larger enterprises, a job role dedicated to integrated management systems that address OHS, QA, Food Safety and EMS is emerging. Where will the people in these roles gain their skills and knowledge? How can their new capabilities be recognised?

Photo: Emma Thomson and Daryl McPhee (background) discussing progress on the Oyster Bay EMS (Tasmania) with local growers.



Industry's response- EMS vocational pathways project:

The need for additional knowledge and skills for seafood industry workers in all aspects of EMS was flagged in the most recent seafood industry Training Plan. In recognition of this, the seafood industry proposed a project to develop new qualifications and units of competency to underpin training for seafood industry workers in EMS. The new qualifications and units will be added to the seafood industry Training Package to address the emerging job roles and responsibilities in EMS.

The project, funded by the Agri-Food Industry Skills Council has the support of the Australian Seafood Industry Council - the peak body of the seafood industry, the National Aquaculture Council, Seafood Services Australia and the Australian Network of Aquaculture Training Providers.

Progress-Stage 1

The first stage of the project completed January 2005 has partially identified the skills and knowledge that contribute to EMS. This has involved consultation with industry leaders and practitioners in EMS in Queensland, ACT, NSW and Tasmania. The search for existing units of competency relevant to EMS has identified units from the Conservation and Land Management Training Package and other Training Packages that can be imported and adapted to the needs of the seafood industry. Units on ecological sustainability will be based on the generic units currently under development in an ANTA-funded project.

Where to from here:

During the next stage of the project, there will be further consultation with enterprises implementing EMS and registered training organisations (RTOs) from all states and territories. Consultation with other sectors of the newly formed Agri-Food Industry Skills Council will also take place. The relevancy of units of competency, and any proposed qualifications will be tested, and the necessary extent of adaptation identified. Stage 2 will be completed by mid April.

It is expected that additional units to address EMS, and if needed new qualification packaging rules will be submitted to Australian National Training Authority for endorsement by mid July 2005.

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