

CAREERS ON LAND & AT SEA

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OVERVIEW

- The processing, fishmongering and retail industries are integral to the fisheries supply chain, but recruitment is a challenge across the board.
- Career opportunities are poorly communicated, so are often overlooked by young people.
- The narrative around seafood careers needs to change.
- Cross-industry collaboration is key to addressing recruitment challenges.
- Education has substantial capacity to shift the perceptions of seafood, and hence seafood careers.
- Training across the sector can facilitate skill-sharing and improve communications concerning the opportunities that exist in UK seafood.

BACKGROUND

Seafood careers

Seafood careers on land comprise skilled manual roles (such as processing, fishmongering and seafood preparation) through to technical roles in consultancy, management and analysis, and diverse roles throughout the supply chain; from retail and sales to sustainable sourcing. The number of people employed within these industries is significant - the seafood processing industry alone supplies around 18,000 jobs in the

UK, of which 48% are filled by UK workers (1). Although jobs on the factory floor retain their importance, roles in evolving sectors like international trade, sustainability and innovation are on the rise, providing diverse opportunities for work in the seafood sector. In parallel, there are concerns that not enough young people are being recruited to sustain this workforce.

Labour shortage

Recruitment is a particular challenge for small businesses, which lack the labour and financial

This briefing summarises the output from the APPG on Fisheries open Parliamentary seminar, 12 June 2019. The meeting brought together stakeholders from across the sector and across the UK. Seafood educators and consultants, charity and advisory body representatives, and industry experts met to discuss recruitment challenges, sector perceptions, and how to overcome barriers to a sustainable industry. This document is a synthesis of the discussions that took place both at the event and online (via #SeafoodCareers).

buffers inherent in a larger business. In many cases preparation of high-quality produce cannot be mechanised, generating a significant need to bring in and train new people in skilled manual roles. There is a perception in the sector that there is no pool of staff to draw from, likely due to a lack of interested potential recruits. This is especially true in areas with low unemployment (1) and leads to poaching of talented staff between small businesses, rather than attracting and training new talent. The challenges of encouraging potential recruits into the seafood industry are discussed below.

CHALLENGES

As with the catch sector (2), the main challenges to onshore recruitment centre on how the sector is perceived (1): from an understanding of the jobs available to a perception of the skills and working conditions associated with them.

Perception of the sector

There was agreement that misconceptions continue to influence potential recruits. Despite the diversity of careers available, and the opportunity to transfer skills, young people entering the jobs market see the sector as unattractive employment. Careers in the seafood industry are often perceived to be unrewarding, dirty, poorly paid or have little capacity for career progression. Market research supports this, revealing that 16-18 year-olds see jobs in seafood as low-skilled, unexciting and focused on fish handling, despite the diversity of careers available (3). Consequently, the seafood industry struggles to recruit and retain employees. Manual work can be both highly skilled and rewarding, but unsociable hours and tough working conditions make recruitment a challenge. Many leave processing and fishmongering roles for better paid work. However, the biggest challenge is awareness of the opportunities within the sector

for a career. These include opportunities within larger organisations working within technical, IT, engineering, product development, finance, HR and buying roles.

WAYS FORWARD

To tackle the misconceptions surrounding seafood careers and challenge existing perceptions of the sector, the narrative around work in the seafood sector needs to change. Routes to achieve this are discussed below.

Working together

There is a need to highlight that seafood offers a career path to take people as far as they wish. The sector needs to work together to show that jobs in seafood are opportunities worth seizing, particularly through clear and consistent messaging on the array of seafood careers available. A combination of local and national approaches to cross-industry coordination, including working closely with industry authorities such as Seafish, could enable this.





Training & up-skilling the workforce

Collaborations across the industry could also help tackle recruitment challenges through using levy funds to train and up-skill the onshore workforce. There are opportunities to learn on the job within many roles. Further facilitating the transfer of skills between positions in the seafood sector may help retain workers, given the appetite for varied and interesting careers among young people. For example, retailers could be brought into seafood schools to do fish counter training. In addition, there is scope for specific standalone courses and apprenticeships to train people up for work in the seafood sector. Initiatives such as the Young Seafood Leaders Network (4) also offer a route for engagement and exchange of ideas between professionals.

Recognition of skills may play an additional role in retention. For example, The Fishmongers' Company and Billingsgate Seafood School are raising the profile of fishmongers through the Master Fishmonger and Young Fishmonger of the Year awards (5).

REFERENCES

1. Seafish, 2018. Seafish Economic Analysis - UK seafood processing sector labour 2018
2. APPG on Fisheries, 2019. Recruitment into Fishing Careers. Policy Brief No. 1. Published July, 2019.
3. Seafish, 2019. The world is your oyster, attracting young people into the seafood sector.
4. Seafish, 2019. Seafish Young Seafood Leaders Network, accessed July 2019.
5. The Fishmongers' Company, 2019. Master Fishmonger, accessed August 2019.

Seafood education

Education, both of catering students and the wider student population, has the potential to shift perceptions around seafood more generally. Enabling catering students to become familiar with a wider range of seafood products (including local, sustainable produce and species beyond those typically consumed) is likely to lead them to using these species in their work, increasing public exposure to seafood. In addition, encouraging people to eat seafood when young, and in school, may make careers in seafood more appealing, simply through familiarity with seafood produce.

SUMMARY

The biggest challenge to recruitment into seafood careers is the perception of the industry. To date, opportunities in the sector have rarely been effectively communicated to target audiences. By working together, the seafood industry can challenge perceptions around careers in the seafood sector, sending a clearer message about the diverse and exciting roles on offer. These messages can be delivered through national and regional seafood networks, training new and existing workers in the sector, and engagement with schools.

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