

FAROE ORIGIN HITS THE GROUND RUNNING

Joint venture Faroe Origin puts former Faroe Seafood facilities in Runavík and Toftir at the center of processing activities, adding fresh products to the mix while keeping trawlers focused on saithe.

THE LARGEST pelagic fishing enterprise in the Faroe Islands, Varðin has joined forces with Framherji and Iceland's Samherji to take over a sizable section of Faroe Seafood's assets following the bankruptcy of the former giant in the groundfish business.

Through their new joint venture christened Faroe Origin, the companies have together put 274 million DKK into buying the failed group's six pair trawlers with their licenses as well as the processing facilities at Vestmanna, Vágur, Runavík and Toftir.

According to Dávid Jacobsen, the Varðin engineer who is the company's acting director alongside Framherji's managing director Anfinn Olsen, plenty of innovative ideas are being considered for the new company.

Faroe Origin's new sales organization is located in the Runavík offices, on the top floor of the former Faroe Seafood processing plant. Together with the saltfish facility a few kilometers away, at Toftir, this is where the bulk of the business will be centered.

The takeover deal brings under Faroe Origin ownership three of the most modern and successful pair teams



operating anywhere in the North Atlantic.

The fleet's history goes back to the Beta trawlers that came to the Faroe Islands in the early 1970s and were rigged for pair trawling to beat the sudden and massive fuel price increases of the mid-1970s. Even when the fuel price fell back to a more reasonable level, pair trawling had been shown to be so efficient that the company decided to stick with it. A decade ago Beta embarked on a rebuilding program, eventually replacing four elderly pair teams with a fleet of three new pairs that today consists of two custom-built pairs, constructed in Vigo, the Stelkur/Bakur and Rókur/Lerkur pairs, plus the Heykur and Falkur sister vessels that were bought second-hand and converted to work as a pair team.

The six trawlers will continue to supply the Faroe Origin processing plants with predominantly saithe catches, plus smaller amounts of by-catches such as cod and tusk.

According to Mr. Jacobsen, the focus of Faroe Origin's production will be on frozen and fresh saithe produced at the Runavík factory for markets in France and Germany. The Toftir plant is expected to concentrate on processing cod, tusk and ling, primarily on saltfish production for traditional markets in the Mediterranean region; the possibility of producing fresh fillets and portions is likewise being considered.

'WE WANT TO KEEP THEM': "We already have an infrastructure," Mr.



Jacobsen said, "but there are going to be some changes. The Runavík processing plant continues to produce block frozen saithe but we are looking carefully at moving into fresh portions as well. As for Toftir, producing fresh fillets or portions of cod, tusk and ling is also something that we're considering for direct exports to the UK."



Mr. Jacobsen added: "At the moment we're working out how to integrate fresh and frozen production, possibly by running two ten-hour shifts in each 24-hour period with a two-hour cleaning down period in between; that way we could run alternate shifts on fresh and frozen production, utilizing the same filleting lines for both. Another possibility is having two parallel lines dedicated for frozen and fresh respectively and running both simultaneously."

Efficiency is one of the primary focus points in reorganizing production, Mr. Jacobsen said. With a close working relationship between Framherji and its Icelandic partners, Faroe Origin representatives have looked carefully at

some of the seafood production plants in Iceland.

"We're certain that smarter management is the key to greater effectiveness," Mr. Jacobsen said, noting that Faroe Origin is investigating ways of getting more out of each shift without increasing workloads and demands on the company's staff, virtually all of whom are former employees who opted to stay on under the new ownership.

"Minimizing the need for breaks in production is one of a few key issues," he said.

"It's vital to ensure that the production plant is also a comfortable place to work, so we want to improve staff facilities with a new canteen and provide

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Fishing company and seafood processor with main focus on delivering top quality products from saithe and whitefish.

6 fully owned trawlers;
3 processing plants.

Fresh and frozen products from saithe. Fresh and wet salted products from cod, ling and tusk.

Pair trawlers (464 GT):
Bakur FD 1201 and Stelkur FD 1202

Pair trawlers (610 GT):
Rókur FD 1205 and Lerkur FD 1206

Pair trawlers (665 GT):
Falkur FD 1204 and Heykur FD 1203

Acting managing director Dávid Jacobsen with production manager Jens Pauli Petersen outside the Runavík facility; processing saithe at Runavík (bottom left); pair team Heykur-Falkur (bottom centered); Stelkur hauling in catch (bottom right).

more amenities for the staff, such as easy internet access at work so that people can do errands like paying a bill at the bank without having to leave the building."

Mr. Jacobsen added: "We were fortunate to be able to keep the key staff with their intimate knowledge of the machinery and processes, and we want to keep them."

