

INDUSTRY TO 'STAY COMPETITIVE' THROUGH RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs has established three research and development centers dedicated to marine biotech, fish harvesting and fish processing technology.

WITH THREE NEW R&D centres established in 2004, the Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs is encouraging Faroe Islands' fishing industry to step up research and development in order to become more innovative and "stay competitive" in today's global and rapidly changing fisheries marketplace.

The new initiative is intended to stimulate the production of scientific documentation in a broad range of areas, from demonstrating the validity of fish stock and seafood product characteristics to underpinning Faroese claims to commercial fishing rights in foreign waters and generally generating industry-relevant innovation and development, said the coordinator of fishing industry research at the Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, Marita Rasmussen.

The three R&D centres are hosted by and based upon the existing infrastructure of Faroese government agencies and public institutions. Headed by researchers Hóraldur Joensen, Bjarti Thomsen and Helgi Nolsøe, for Marine Biotech, Fish Harvesting Technology, and Fish Processing Technology, respectively, each centre is backed by a Programme

Committee consisting of researchers and industry representatives.

"We are also cooperating very closely with the fishing industry,"

Ms Rasmussen said. "These first three R&D centres established under the 'Granskingarætlanir' R&D programme cover certain areas of

the industry's needs, and will possibly be followed by additional R&D centres."

Ms Rasmussen added: "The R&D centers are commissioned to build scientific capacity of relevance to the industry, by participating in and organizing R&D projects in cooperation with the industry and research institutes abroad as well as in the Faroes. Through these activities the centers will both develop scientifically and grow in scope as more researchers become part of their networks. The idea is that the outcome of the activities will help the industry stay competitive."

FUNDING R&D STAFF: Another R&D programme coordinated by Ms Rasmussen, the 'Fiskivinnuroyndir' is funding 25 to 30 projects annually. The programme aims to stimulate both scientific and industrial R&D projects in order to "develop Faroese fisheries industry, harvesting, processing and trade, with regards to biologically, economically and socially sustainable use of the ocean's resources." Aiming to increase industrial projects compared to previous years, the programme has in 2005 awarded commercial companies a 48 percent share of the budget, government agencies and public institutions received 35 percent while the

new R&D centres and various PhD projects acquired the remaining 17 percent.

Among current R&D projects are the exploration of opportunities for developing highly value-added ingredients from fish liver for the functional food and nutraceuticals industry, awarded to the startup company Faroe Marine Biotech. Another project awarded funding was the 'National Digital Traceability System' which is exploring the potential for a Tracefish standard, industry-wide system for fish traceability in the Faroes, linking data in digital form from fishing vessels, sea landing stations, fish markets, processors, traders and transporters to a centralized system.

In a parallel development under the 'Fiskivinnuroyndir' programme, a new sub-programme called 'Industrial Researcher Facilitation' has been launched with the objective to enable more of the predominantly small Faroese companies to employ research and development staff for a limited time. Under the arrangement, which includes funding of half of the wages for the R&D staffer, projects have revolved around traceability and seafood quality issues. According to Ms Rasmussen, the aim of the 'Industrial Researcher Facilitation' is to inspire the industry to employ more

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Headed by the Minister of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, the Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs represents the Faroese Government's authority in overall charge of the fisheries and maritime affairs of the Faroe Islands.

Departments and Agencies under the Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs:

Faroese Fisheries Laboratory
Faroese Maritime Authority
Fire Protection Agency
Fisheries Administration
Fisheries Control Agency and Coast Guard
MRCC (Maritime Rescue and Coordination Center)
The Ship Register

academic staff for business operations.

"Overall, subjects such as sustainable development, health, safety at work and the environment are of paramount importance," said Ms Rasmussen.

"Our challenge, which is also reflected in the choice of projects that are awarded funding, is to help make sure the natural resources of the ocean are managed in a responsible manner by all."



Marita Rasmussen, coordinator of fishing industry research.