

Since hooking up with a new cooperative of day boat fishermen, Rainbow Seafood's export business has grown dramatically, making the company look like the leading Faroese supplier of extra fresh groundfish.

NOT LONG AGO, coastal fishermen in the northern village of Eiði on the Faroe island of Eysturoy would complain that the average price they got for their catch of haddock, cod and flatfish was remarkably lower than the average price received by larger longliners. As their fishing trips never exceeded 24 hours, the day boat fishermen wondered why they couldn't seem to receive a better price for their fresh catch compared to other longliners that would often be out for a week or even more. Then someone had an idea: team up with professional seafood exporters through a new organization based on economically sustainable terms.

It turned out Rainbow Seafood would be the first choice partner for Batafiskur, the new cooperative, to join forces with. Complying with a mandatory, effective method for ensuring maximum freshness of the fish brought in—and importantly, a fresh new spirit of optimism—the now fifteen members of the cooperative, only two years later, have become the envy of other fishermen.



SETTING THE SEAFOOD STANDARD, EXTRA FRESH

MARIA OLSEN

"I'd say we've had a sea change here," said Ashbjörn Djurhuus, a board member of Batafiskur and a former skipper, now land-based manager, of longliner Norðsöki FD 530.

Batafiskur's managing director, Per Mikkelsen, who is also a partner in Rainbow Seafood, added: "We've put a mechanism in place that, apart from securing supplies, makes sure that our clients get the very best quality of fresh fish. It seems we've been setting an example for others too, which of course we're very proud of—signs are the overall attention paid to product quality management has increased considerably since we started this operation."

The product quality system employed by Rainbow Seafood and

Batafiskur, consists in a series of criteria and minimum standard requirements that follow the freshfish value chain from catch to at-sea handling to landing, to on-shore packaging and shipping. Central to the system is the obligatory, consistent use of seawater-based slush ice in clean plastic containers for the fish to be placed in immediately after catch, bleeding, gutting and cleaning.

The containers are kept under the deck until landing at a sea landing station authorized by the Food, Veterinary and Environmental Agency (HFS), usually the local landing station. The refrigeration chain remains unbroken through to sorting and packaging at the likewise HFS authorized processing facility a few meters from the quayside at Eiði, and

an excellent working relationship and team spirit. We're consistent and make no exceptions to the basic rules—such as the application of our specific cleaning and chilling method, or the standard requirement that there have to be at least two crew members on every fishing trip, in order to ensure quick and effective cleaning and chilling of the fish; besides, a minimum of two persons is also a good safety precaution."

A TO Z REFRIGERATION: According to Mr Mikkelsen, the members of Batafiskur are the first day boats in the Faroes to exclusively use the combined cleaning and shush-ice chilling system.

"The slush ice is based on seawater and it chills the fish very quickly down to 0 centigrade or slightly below without freezing it," Mr Mikkelsen added. "This method emulates the temperature of the natural environment of the groundfish caught here, and it creates the basis for a supreme product quality."

Another element in the quality management system addresses traceability, providing every shipped box of seafood with information on the specific inquiries as to product origin that clients and stakeholders may have. Accordingly, at the Batafiskur onshore processing facility, a highly sophisticated, automatic grading system registers where and when each fish was caught and by which boat, guaranteeing full traceability on every box. "Every tub of catch that reaches our grading line carries information on which vessel caught it when and where," Mr Mikkelsen said.

After the swift and smooth grading process, before the fish is packed and shipped, that piece of information as well as information on species and size is attached to each 40-kilogram

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Exporter of seafood products – fresh whole gutted and fillets; frozen fillets.

Species: Haddock, cod, halibut, monkfish, whiting, plaice, lemon sole, ling, tusk (brosme), salmon.

box—the fish is landed, graded, packed and palletized in a refrigerated environment, shipped by refrigerated transport, and not opened before it arrives at the client. As Mr Mikkelsen noted: "Our vertically integrated system offers full control at every stage from catch to distribution and enables us to guarantee the very best in quality fish from the Faroes, 52 weeks a year."

The main species caught by Batafiskur members are haddock, cod and flatfish such as monkfish, plaice and halibut. With its international sales and sourcing network, Rainbow however offers a wide range of seafood products, both fresh and frozen. Likewise, the company recently through its subsidiary Greipan set up a filleting plant in the village of Oyndarfjörður, not far away from Eiði, a few months after having acquired the Snodd fish handling facility at Toftir.



Batafiskur managing director Per Mikkelsen with board member Ashbjörn Djurhuus; cooperative member Sonni Kalsoy landing a day's catch of fresh cod (bottom left); Rainbow Seafood shipment (bottom right).

temperature-controlled shipment to final destination.

Driven by the Rainbow-Batafiskur team members' strong motivation to perform, the principle behind the successful seafood quality standard is based on the use of effective inspections and controls, said Regin Mikkelsen, managing director of Rainbow Seafood.

"Our involvement with Batafiskur has proved very meaningful," he said, "but its success depends on the responsibility of everyone who participates in the system. We may have a fiery argument at times over technicalities but we have