

VESSEL OWNERS: BEYOND PERCEPTION

The Faroe Fishing Vessel Owners' Association is engaging policymakers in an outreach effort prior to an expected fisheries reform, meanwhile further reinforcing its organization with Anfinn Olsen as new chairman of the board.

THE UMBRELLA organization of the Faroe Islands' commercial fishing vessels—the Faroe Fishing Vessel Owners' Association (Føroya Reiðarafelag)—looks poised to reclaim its role as an active participant in, and a significant contributor to, top-level consultations on fisheries policy. The association, until recently undergoing a prolonged period of limited activity, took steps to revitalize itself by hiring Herálvur Joensen for managing director in 2013.

Mr. Joensen quickly set out to reorganize the Vessel Owners as a joint organization and coordinate some of the varying interests of the association—in fact the member groups represent vessel types that vary using differing fishing technologies, just as the species they target and the areas work in vary as well.

One-and-a-half year after employing Mr. Joensen, in the process joining forces with the House of Industry, the non-executive board of the Vessel Owners appointed Anfinn Olsen, of fishing company Framherji, as chairman of the board.

Meanwhile, an obvious priority on the agenda is about dealing with a long-coming fisheries reform that now appears to have reached an advanced stage in the political process.

“We have been consulted and have offered our input alongside our colleagues in the trade unions and the hope is that the Ministry of Fisheries will be able to present a package that has the backing of all major political parties. Otherwise we'll be faced with the risk that a subsequent government will tear it apart and come up with something new again in a vicious circle that could go on and on. So we want to stress the point that political stability is a critical success factor for the entire industry and that whatever

changes may be forthcoming in the legislative and regulatory framework should be well considered and thought out. If we want to see people continue to invest in the industry, we'll have to know with some certainty what the legal environment will look like a few years down the road.”

'VIBRANT, COMPETITIVE'

While once again being a tenant at the House of Industry may have an impact on perception, there is an equally important practical side to it.

“The fact that we moved office to the House of Industry may have sent a signal that the Vessel Owners are taking a more proactive approach with a view on participating more effectively in the dialogue with trade organizations and public authorities,” Mr. Joensen said. “This may have helped the association, at least to a degree, to restore its image as an important power broker whether in business and employee relations, policymaking, or public opinion. Part of it is purely practical—the Pelagic Organization is already here and they are one of our most active members. Also the new premises are outstanding, with excellent office facilities.”

The Vessel Owners have been further strengthened by the appointment of Mr. Olsen as chairman to represent the elected board of the member organizations.

“In some cases it makes more sense to have the chairman represent the association,” Mr. Joensen said. “It depends on the nature of the relationship—if it's relating to overall vision and strategy, the chairman will often be the most appropriate person to represent us. On the other hand, if it's something that is more tangible, the MD will usually be the person. But again, there's always a practical side to it as well and we can be very flexible.”



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The Faroe Fishing Vessels Owners' Association is the joint association for Faroese fishing vessel owners' organizations.

The Association's overall purpose is to provide a common platform for all fishing vessel owners of the Faroe Islands and to promote and protect the joint interests of its members.

Member organizations:

- Verksmiðjutrolarar (Freezer Trawlers)
- Nótaskip (Faroe Pelagic Organisation)
- Ídnaðarskip o.a. (Industrial Trawlers)
- Rækjuskip (Factory Shrimpers)
- Lemmatrolarar (Stern Trawlers)
- Partrolarar (Pair Trawlers)
- Línuskip (Longliners)
- Garnaskip (Gillnetters)

Managing Director
Herálvur Joensen.



Longliner.



Pair trawlers.



Freezer trawler.



Purse seiner/pelagic trawler.

Lately the association sponsored a report by economist Magni Laksáfoss on the domestic socioeconomic impact of the fishing industry in the Faroe Islands. In the report, the gross domestic factor income of the fishing industry is assessed, for example, at just about half of the entire gross domestic product of approximately 12 billion DKK (1.6bn EUR) in 2012 figures.

“Documents such as the report on socioeconomic impact by Laksáfoss help us explain to stakeholders some of the underlying facts that ought to be part of the considerations of

any plan to introduce change in our political environment,” Mr. Joensen said. “We've been holding a series of meetings with representatives of all the political parties represented in Parliament to exchange views and acquaint ourselves with their positions on fisheries policy. The idea is to create ongoing dialogue in a non-prejudiced way and perhaps even, to the extent possible, build consensus on key issues. After all, my impression is that most people are essentially interested in the same thing—maintaining a vibrant, competitive Faroese fishing industry.”