

BLUE WHITING REVIVAL SPELLS OPPORTUNITY

As a leading maker of blue whiting trawls, Vónin is looking to fortify its position with the current rise in the international catch quota for blue whiting—with other pelagic fisheries, notably mackerel and herring, set to drive demand too.

DURING THE blue whiting bonanza a few years ago, gear maker Vónin managed to build a strong position in the market for trawls used in the international fishery, which largely takes place in Faroese waters.

A total 2.4 million tonnes of the species were caught in 2006—of which the Faroese took as much as 312,000 tonnes—as Vónin earned a reputation for producing the best blue whiting fishing gear in the market, supplying not only Faroese vessels but others as well, including Dutch, Russian and Icelandic.

The blue whiting fishery was brought under the regulation of the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) in 2007, with a total allowable catch (TAC) set at 2.1m tonnes.



Vónin sales manager Søren Havmand, left, with Jógvan S. Jacobsen, head of the company's Pelagic division; Production manager Sámal Olsen handling a mackerel trawl (opposite bottom); Pumping in blue whiting (right); Faroese fish farm (below).

Then, in the following years, the TAC was drastically reduced, down to virtually zero in 2011, or 40,100 tonnes.

Now with the blue whiting stock showing signs of buoyancy, regulators began to ease restrictions in 2012, and

have continued to do so, setting the TAC for 2013 at 619,000 tonnes; that's 154,614 for the Faroese, who have decided, however, to trade roughly half of the tonnage with the Russians for the right to catch groundfish in the Barents Sea.

With this turn of events, the blue whiting fishery is again fast becoming an attractive option for pelagic fishing fleets. The fact that the species is increasingly fished in Faroese waters makes Vónin look perfectly located to serve pelagic vessels from multiple countries—only a



few hours steaming away from the fishing grounds.

Last year Vónin took over three-quarters of Strandby Net, a Danish gear manufacturer with net lofts in Strandby as well as in Skagen, Denmark's largest hub for the pelagic fishing industry. The move further strengthened Vónin's ability to supply fishing gear to vessels anywhere. In other overseas markets, the company already has a strong foothold in Greenland and in Canada while growing rapidly in Norway.

HIGHER WAVES, STRONGER CURRENTS NO UPSET FOR FAROESE FISH FARMERS

Battered by extreme weather and sea conditions in a natural environment far more hostile than most other places—Faroese fish farms are built to last, using the most robust equipment in the world, according to Vónin Aquaculture.

FOR FISH FARMERS in Scotland or Norway, a wave height of 8 meters is rather unthinkable, not to mention a current strength of 0.8 m per second. Now go to the Faroe Islands and you will soon see that such conditions are considered nothing out of the ordinary—that is, they are quite common during winter in certain locations, as measured in 100-hour blocks.

Extreme conditions by Faroese standards, is quite a different thing. Back in November 2011, Landsverk, the Faroese Public Works Agency, recorded wave

heights of up to 19.7 m, in fact the highest ever since records began in the late 1960s—possibly the highest on record anywhere, according to the agency.

Even on that occasion, Faroese fish farms largely suffered no significant damages, however one installation had its anchorage compromised and started drifting.

Vónin Aquaculture manager Signar Poulsen said: "But such incidents are extremely rare in the Faroe Islands; I cannot recall any other time that something like this happened."

Out of a total of ten, two fish farming locations in the Faroe Islands regularly have currents of up to 0.8 m per second while two other have wave heights of up to 8 m. As far as concerns equipment, the ability to withstand the

elements is a standard requirement in Faroese fish farming.

Today every aquaculture installation in the Faroes uses equipment from Vónin Aquaculture, according to Mr. Poulsen. "Our offerings range from

complete solutions to component parts," he said, "everything from net cages and floating frames to mooring systems and accessories."

He added: "Everybody is talking about taking fish farms further out to sea. In the Faroes, I'm afraid we don't have much choice as the available space in sheltered sea areas is very limited.

"So there is much focus on whether our standard equipment will be robust enough for use offshore. Well, I'd say that some of the farms are already half-way offshore and they are certainly not having issues with the equipment. But the rule of thumb is, the further out you go the more hostile the environment."



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Developer and manufacturer of fishing gear and aquaculture equipment for the international markets. Reseller of related products. Advice, service, repairs.

Offices: Faroe Islands, Norway, Greenland, Canada, Denmark.

Own net lofts and warehouses in Fuglafjørður, Tórshavn, Norðskála, Nuuk, Sisimiut, Aasiaat, Illulissat, Port-de-Grave, Honningsvåg, Tromsø, Finnsnes, Svolvær, Rørvik, Strandby, Skagen.

Bottom trawls, shrimp trawls, midwater trawls, semi-pelagic trawls, purse seine nets, sorting grids and nets, trawl doors, ropes, wires, twines, chains, shackles, spare parts, accessories.

Nets for fish farming, float frames, drum net washers, mooring systems.