



# CAREERS IN THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SEAFOOD INDUSTRY

The South Australian Seafood industry is a major export industry for the State and has a collective value of around \$800 million annually. As a major food producing industry it offers a wide range of jobs.

Choosing a career is important and the following are important considerations:

- The food production industry will become vitally important over the next forty years as demand for all food outstrips supply. This will provide secure jobs (as we all have to eat).
- Many of the jobs are well paid especially in the higher levels
- In some sectors, the skills that young people develop will be in demand internationally so people can work overseas with their skills and qualifications.

The major occupational areas are:

**Commercial Fishing**

**Aquaculture (mostly sea farming)**

**Aquaculture Hatchery and Land based**

**Seafood Processing**

**Seafood Marketing and Distribution**

**Fisheries Compliance Officer**



## Commercial Fishing

South Australia has a large and diverse Fishing Industry. The main industry sectors are Rock Lobster Fishing, Prawn Fishing, Marine Finfish Fishing, Sardine Fishing, Tuna Fishing, Crab Fishing and Trawl Fishing.

The Tuna industry is made up of both the catching sector and the tuna farming sector where the fish are grown out in large sea cages.

Most of the industry is seasonal with quite different fishing seasons in each sector. The fishing boats vary from small two person vessels through to large ocean going vessels with crews up to 12 people. All boats are driven by a Skipper (a licensed Maritime qualification). Typically boats have a Coxswain (Leading hand crew member), deck crew and a marine engineer (Marine Engine Driver).

The industry mostly works on a share of catch arrangement where all crew share in the value of the catch. This can often mean that deck hand wages are quite good (\$50 -70,000 is common) which is not bad for a seasonal industry.

Obviously the higher the Maritime qualification, the more people earn. To get a Maritime qualification you need to have accumulated time working at sea (sea time) and undertaken some short courses in sea safety, navigation and vessel operations.

The first level vessel operating qualification is a Coxswain Certificate which allows the person to drive a small commercial vessel. The next qualification is a Master Class 5 (Skipper 3 Level). This allows the Skipper to drive a larger commercial boat. Then after that the next qualification is a Master 4 (Skipper 2) level and finally a Master 3 (Skipper 1) level which is really for large ocean going fishing boats.

These qualifications are not just in the seafood industry, they are **maritime qualifications** which means they can be used on trading boats (passenger liners, tug boats, oil tankers, container ships etc). Some fishing crew work a fishing season then work in the charter boat industry or even do some short term trading work.

Most fishing boats need a Marine Engine Driver to keep them operating. These positions are really the lower level of marine engineers. There is a national shortage of marine engineers so anyone with a mechanical aptitude can train in this field and find work. The pay is generally very good and Marine Engine Drivers can earn beyond \$100,000 each year in some fisheries.

Marine Engineering is also a well paid job in the trading sector and there are always opportunities to move from Marine Engine Driving into more senior marine engineering roles.

## Aquaculture (Sea Farming)

South Australia has a very large marine farming industry. The main sectors are Tuna farming, Finfish farming, Oyster farming and Mussel farming.

Most of the jobs require maritime skills (operating sea going vessels) ranging from small oyster boats to large feed boats. These vessels are used to set up and maintain the sea farming systems and feed and harvest the various species.

Each aquaculture sector is different with mussels being grown on rope systems in the sea, oysters being grown in small plastic baskets on lines located close to shore and tuna and finfish in large sea cages in the ocean.



Each operation is different but there are some common themes. All people working on sea farms operate as a team with a range of daily tasks involving checking the fish or molluscs, managing the environment, feeding the fish and harvesting the fish or molluscs. Farms operate every day of the year.

The companies that employ marine aquaculture staff prefer people who are used to boats and familiar with fish species. They range from small three or four person businesses to large corporate style companies employing over a hundred people.

Most training is on the job and as staff obtain sea time, they can undertake formal training to get maritime certificates of competency eg. Coxswain, Marine Engine Driver, Skipper.

There are also a range of other industry jobs including Farm Manager, Environmental Manager, Quality manager, Sales and Export Clerks and Managers, Distribution or Logistics Managers and a range of general clerical and accounts positions.



## Aquaculture Hatchery and Land Based

South Australia has a number of hatcheries growing various species for both sea farms and land based farms. These hatcheries hold broodstock which produce very small eggs that are hatched out and commonly fed on algae and very small marine creatures such as rotifers.

There are hatcheries and land based farms that specialise in abalone, fin fish and oysters. Species such as Barramundi, Tuna, Yellowtail Kingfish, Abalone and Oysters are grown out in these hatcheries and when they reach a certain size are put out into larger grow out tanks and ponds or sea cages.



Occupations in hatcheries include Marine Biologists, Aquaculture Technicians, General aquaculture workers and Managers. The skills required are often quite different from sea farming skills.

## Seafood Processing, Sales and Distribution

The Seafood Industry has a large processing and distribution sector much of which is focussed on export of product, especially Tuna and Rock Lobsters. The facilities vary quite considerably from live lobster holding centres through to processing plants that fillet fish and process oysters. They are located throughout the State with some of the larger processors operating in Port Lincoln, Adelaide and the South East.

There are also specialist export facilities that chill or can product for export and other processing facilities that simply service the domestic market. Most Processing and Distribution facilities have cool working environments as seafood is perishable and needs to be kept cool, chilled or frozen. Some export freezing processes can take the seafood product down to -65degrees Centigrade.

Jobs in this sector vary considerably from:

**Filleting Fish**

**Oyster shucking**

**Retail sales**

**Loading**

**Chiller/freezer room operation**

**Machinery Operation**

**Packing and loading**

**Plus a variety of support roles including clerical, transport, managerial and technical.**

Some jobs are full-time, others casual. The workforce has a strong contingent of casual staff who often process in the mornings for daily deliveries of seafood to shops, hotels and restaurants.

Staff are trained in food safety requirements, food handling and storage and some have specialist skills in export documentation and quality.

Fish filleting training courses are available and those keen to work towards management and food technology positions can progress through some organisations with further study.



## Fisheries Compliance Officer

These are Fisheries Officers who have a role in ensuring that our fish stocks are fished responsibly.

They are employed by the South Australian Government and work with both the Commercial and Recreational Fishing Sectors to ensure that our fisheries remain sustainable.

The jobs are located throughout the State and Fisheries Officers often work unusual hours to make sure that the correct fish sizes and catch limits are maintained. Part of their role is to make sure that commercial catches are within any quota management limits they work closely with both fishers and scientists to ensure our fish stocks are sustainable.

The skills these officers need include vessel operating skills, administration skills, policing and reporting skills and good public contact skills. Much of what Fisheries Officers do is educational as much as it is policing and with the proposed marine park network their roles are expected to expand to managing sensitive marine environments.

There are only a small number of Fisheries Officers employed in the State and annual recruitment numbers are usually very small (less than 5). Competition for these positions is high and anyone thinking of applying can undertake Certificate courses in Fisheries Compliance or alternatively work in the Fishing or Aquaculture industry and obtain vessel operating competencies.