



Australian Southern Rocklobster Industry

HOT SPOTS

- » SRL products win major awards
- » Far reaching benefits for industry
- » Increases world recognition of product

International acclaim for rocklobster products

The value-added range of Southern Rocklobster products, created by South Australian company Ferguson Australia, was awarded two major prizes in the Seafood Prix d'Elite New Products Competition at the European Seafood Exposition in May.



The award winning premium rocklobster medallions.



Debra and Andrew Ferguson, Ferguson Australia (far right), with other major awards winners in the Seafood Prix d'Elite New Products Competition.

Ferguson Australia premium rocklobster medallions (from over 2kg lobsters), won the New Products Competition Food Service Award and the Special Health and Nutrition Award, ahead of entries from across the globe. The competition is evaluated by a distinguished panel of judges including key international buyers, chefs and journalists.

Andrew Ferguson, Ferguson Australia Managing Director, said he was extremely pleased with the recognition their product had received on the world stage, at what is recognised as the most prestigious of world events in the domain of seafood.

"We believe our medallions are an outstanding product, that shows a high level of quality and innovation, and this wonderful acknowledgment certainly supports our claims," Mr Ferguson said.

"These two Awards are a fantastic reward for the huge amount of work we have put into the development of our innovative rocklobster product range."

"Being a family business this has involved personal commitment as well as managing the risks associated with creating a new product of this magnitude."

Mr Ferguson said the natural, ready to cook medallions were designed for the high-end foodservice market and are processed to be served in the shell.

"They are cut from large Southern Rocklobster tails using state-of-the art technology that slices the fresh meat and shell cleanly, leaving no shell fragments within the meat."

Mr Ferguson said the Awards would not only benefit his Adelaide-based company but would have other far-reaching benefits across the whole industry.

"The achievement will highlight the quality of Southern Rocklobster product and heighten its recognition throughout the world."



Part of the Australian stand at the Exposition in Brussels.

New puerulus collectors for Northern Zone



A stage one puerulus taken from a 'Booth' collector.

Ten additional puerulus collectors have been deployed in two new sites within the South Australian Northern Zone Rock Lobster Fishery (NZRLF) to improve baseline data on the recruitment processes of the Southern Rocklobster.

Dr Adrian Linnane from the Aquatic Sciences division of the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) said the new sites were located at Marion Bay on Yorke

Peninsula and Vivonne Bay on Kangaroo Island.

"The collectors were positioned in March this year and are currently undergoing a 'seasoning' period," Dr Linnane said.

"Based on the 'Booth' collector originally designed in New Zealand, they are constructed of plywood sheets and simulate reef crevices into which puerulus naturally settle in the wild."

Dr Linnane said rates of puerulus and post-puerulus settlement have been monitored at McLaren Point and Taylor Island in the NZRLF since 1996.

"Personnel from SARDI service the collectors monthly with the data used to calculate a relative index of puerulus abundance."

"Recruitment in these areas has proven to be low however, necessitating the need for new sites to give better resolution," he continued.

"The information on year-to-year settlement levels is used to predict trends in recruitment, the extent to which recruitment varies inter-annually and changes in stock abundance."

HOT SPOTS

- » New collectors in South Australia
- » New design based on New Zealand model
- » Additional data to predict trends

"It is hoped the additional collectors will improve the strength of the current datasets and contribute significantly to the development of fishery assessment models," Dr Linnane concluded.

There has been a mixed response from South Australian licence holders to the May fishing trial, with some participating fishermen reporting many benefits from the Fisheries Management Committee (FMC) initiative, while others have raised several management issues.

Concern over market conditions led the FMC to investigate the May trial, which following a vote by licence holders, resulted in trial commercial fishing in the Southern Zone of South Australia for one month in May.

Commercial fishermen participating in the trial were limited to fishing for existing quota allocations by holding back quota. No new quota allocations were made to allow for the trial. At least 25 commercial fishermen fished during the May trial, across five of the main south east ports.

Pt MacDonnell licence holder, Bob Bowd, expressed his concerns about the trial questioning the extra cost of compliance and his overall reluctance to take risks with a fishery that is performing well.

"Such a change is not necessary when the stock has rebuilt so well and I am concerned about the impact on pregnant females, said Mr Bowd.

"And of course the trial has incurred extra compliance costs to which everyone has contributed."

Mixed response to Southern Zone fishing trial

HOT SPOTS

- » Mixed response to May trial
- » Some fishers concerned over effects on lobster stocks
- » Main indicators generally positive

Barry Williams, also a licence holder from Pt MacDonnell, was more positive about the trial, claiming benefits to the stock from substantially less octopus predation in the pots and the extra flexibility of spreading out fishing.

"The major benefits have been in my returns, with high quality very firm lobster, at catch rates not too far away from my season average and a fantastic price up by 50% or \$12/kilogram during the trial," he said.

Southend licence holder and FMC member, Joel Redman, said his fishing experiences during May had led him to believe the trial had been a success although a full biological assessment still needs to be undertaken.

"Catch rates in May were at least as good as, and better in some areas, than during the regular season and I have also noticed octopus predation rates were extremely low; as low as they have been for the year," Mr Redman said.

Mr Redman also said weather conditions were favourable in his area during the trial period.

"Obviously we always have to fish around the weather but apart from three rough days at the beginning of the month we had excellent conditions for fishing," he said.

Another key component of the trial was the introduction of additional compliance measures, through prior reporting.

Simon Peters, FMC member from Kingston said that as a new initiative, there was a higher level of scrutiny of fishermen and the introduction of prior reporting added another dimension to compliance regulations.

"Although there were some early teething problems, the simple and easy nature of prior reporting, a one minute phone call made the process a success," Mr Peters said

"The three main indicators during the trial period for me - price, catch rate and weather - were all very positive."

SARDI Aquatic Sciences collected additional biological data during the trial and the FMC will assess the outcomes of the trial in June.



Each translocated rocklobster was photographed and tagged to facilitate follow-up surveys.

HOT SPOTS

- » Tasmania investigates translocation
- » Aims to improve market value
- » Possible ecological advantages

Southern Rocklobsters on the move

The Tasmanian Rock Lobster Fishermen's Association and the Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute (TAFI) have commenced an investigation into shifting or "translocating" rocklobsters between regions.

Dr Caleb Gardner, TAFI Leader Crustacean Research Section, said the idea had been proposed for decades in Tasmania to overcome some of the spatial management problems around the state.

"Interest has recently grown due to low egg production in the north of the state despite growing biomass in other areas, especially deep-water areas in the south west," Dr Gardner said.

"More difficult market conditions have also focused attention on improving the value of each of the finite number of rocklobsters that recruit each year."

Dr Gardner said although Tasmanian rocklobster stocks are generally healthy, some areas are fished down dramatically due to:

- Some areas having higher growth rates so the minimum legal size has reduced effect.
- Market demand, and therefore fishing pressure, being greater for inshore rocklobsters due to their dark red shells.

"Translocation is being investigated as a solution to these spatial management problems with the ultimate aim to move towards higher returns per rocklobster and larger total catches."

Dr Gardner said a small-scale translocation was undertaken in late April and involved capturing 1220 rocklobsters from a low-growth area off Strahan.

"This location has very high catch rates of undersize rocklobsters but very few females reach legal size," explained Dr Gardner

"They were then shifted to Stanley in the western Bass Strait and released on a single strip of reef near a commercial port so that follow-up surveys could be conducted easily."

"Each rocklobster has been tagged and photographed so that we can monitor movement, change in colour and growth."

"We are also hopeful that the tag-recapture data will allow us to plan future experiments to look at the survival of the rocklobsters following release," concluded Dr Gardner.



OBJECTIVES OF THE PILOT EXPERIMENT ARE TO:

- Determine the extent of colour change in lobsters shifted from deep water to shallow water over a short time period (four months).
- Provide information on movement of translocated lobster away from the release site.
- Provide information on recapture probabilities for simulation analyses to plan experiments to measure survival.

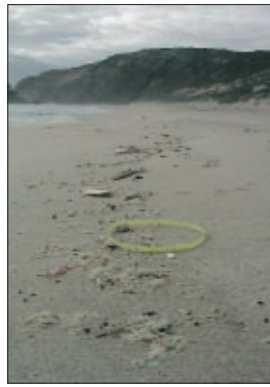


Undersize rocklobsters were captured from deep water in areas where few females reach legal size and all animals are white or brindled.



TRANSLOCATION MAY IMPROVE:

- The market value of lobsters by converting low-grade, pale, deep-water lobsters into higher value red lobsters.
- The proportion of the catch that is in the optimal 800-1500g category.
- Yields in release sites through shifting lobsters from areas where they do not reach legal size to areas where they will grow faster and contribute to the fishery.
- Yields in areas from where lobsters have been removed, as it is suspected that these stocks are currently food-limited.
- Egg production in northern areas where it is below management targets.
- The ecological status of the fishery by raising stocks closer to unfished levels.



HOT SPOTS

- » Initiative to remove plastic straps
- » Minimising impact on protected species
- » Policy to be implemented by 1 October

Industry goes strapless to protect seals

In an industry initiated move to protect seals and sea lions, the South Australian Rocklobster Advisory Council (SARLAC) and SeaNet have launched a program to remove plastic strapping from all rocklobster vessels in South Australia.

SARLAC Executive Officer, Roger Edwards, said concern over the death of seals and sea lions has been reignited following questions raised in Parliament late last year and recent media coverage highlighting the need to remove all plastic straps from fishing vessels.

"Over the past five years the majority of license holders have disposed of plastic in onshore facilities before going to sea, but it is now time to have a 100% uptake of a no plastic straps on boats policy," Mr Edwards said.

"The successful uptake of this initiative is crucial to minimise the impact on protected species within our fishery and to meet our environmental protection obligations."

The SA rocklobster industry, worth \$100 million annually and generating over 3000 jobs, has successfully completed an environmental assessment by Environment Australia and is strongly committed to minimising fishing impacts in the marine environment.

South Australian SeaNet extension officer, Claire van der Geest (see below), is managing the no plastics program with assistance and support from the rocklobster industry and Seafood Council SA.

"This program aims to have a 100% adoption of a no plastic straps policy for all rocklobster boats in South Australia by 1 October 2004, through a program targeting license holders and the current practices of crews," Ms van der Geest said.

"Most importantly, the program aims to stop the problem at the source and as plastic straps come from bait suppliers and processors, we are asking them to remove the straps at the factory."



Claire van der Geest, South Australia's SeaNet Officer who commenced work in February 2004, will be working on a variety of projects aimed at improving environmental practices of all fishermen. SeaNet is a national extension service to the commercial fishing industry funded by the National Heritage Trust.

Seanet officer to build environmental credentials

HOT SPOTS

- » New SeaNet officer in South Australia
- » Focus on EMS
- » Addressing industry environmental issues

Claire, who is hosted by the Seafood Council for 12 months, has previously worked on the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation project, Effectiveness of TEDs and BRDs in Queensland's trawl fisheries.

"During this project I was responsible for the collection of more than 300 bycatch samples, with one third from commercial vessels," said Claire.

"Most recently I have spent six weeks on the RV Gwendoline May, Queensland Department of Primary Industries, research trawler, collecting samples for the CRC Reef, Seabed Biodiversity of the Great Barrier Reef project."

"This collaborative research by CSIRO, AIMS, QDPI and the Queensland Museum is forming part of a large scale project to map all of Australia's marine biodiversity."

Claire says she will be assisting the commercial industry in a number of areas in her role as SeaNet Officer.

"I will be focussing on Environmental Management Systems (EMS) including the establishment of 'best practice' methods and environmental certifications, for example MSC,

under the principles of ecologically sustainable development and the lobster industry Clean Green program."

Claire said she would also be looking at marine mammal interactions, seeking to reduce the interactions of fishing gear with mammal populations and employing various techniques such as pingers.

Another of her tasks will be bycatch reduction and passing on information on strategies for improvement to key South Australian fisheries. Improving access to waste disposal facilities at all ports, is another area of interest.

Claire can be contacted about any environmental issues affecting the seafood industry on 0429 984 323 or seanet@corvel.com.au

National spotlight on industry Clean Green initiative

HOT SPOTS

- » Minister launches Clean Green as a national case study
- » National experts impressed by Clean Green
- » First Clean Green pilot test undertaken



Meeting with Senator Judith Troeth, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (third from left) at the launch of the National Seafood EMS project in Canberra.

Southern Rocklobster Limited's ground breaking Clean Green program is one of six case studies under the newly announced national Environmental Management Systems (EMS) project, funded by the Federal Government.

Samara Miller, Seafood Council (SA) EMS Project Manager, said the aim of the project is to understand whether the adoption of EMS addresses the environmental, economic and social goals of the rocklobster industry.

Ms Miller met with Senator Judith Troeth, the Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in Canberra at the launch of the national project in April and believes that the project offers the opportunity for industry to demonstrate that improved environmental outcomes can be achieved without the need for regulation.

"We expect that the project will recognise that industry is in the best position to guide its members on improving management practices," said Ms Miller.

Ms Miller gave a presentation on the Clean Green Rocklobster Program to a panel of experts in Canberra and received positive and constructive feedback on the Program.

"Many participants were amazed to find how far the Clean Green Program has come over the last 12 months through developing an EMS that incorporates standards from pot to plate - right to the consumer," said Ms Miller.

"A critical part of the Clean Green Program is the third party auditing of environmental, food safety, work place and community standards."

"The first pilot test of the audit procedure for the EMS was conducted recently in Southend, Robe and Pt MacDonnell, South Australia, with five fishers and two processors in the Southern Zone Rocklobster Fishery."

"This has now allowed the standards for the rocklobster industry to be finalised with independent auditor, Joint Accreditation System of Australia and New Zealand (JAS-ANZ)."

For more information on the EMS projects being conducted by the Seafood Council please contact Samara Miller on 08 8682 4600.

VIDEO AVAILABLE NOW

Best practice in the Australian Southern Rocklobster Industry



From the moment the pot enters the water to the time the lobster is served to a customer, we all have the opportunity to contribute to the continual improvement of our industry and share in the ecologically sustainable, economic and social benefits that it will continue to deliver.

Purchase a copy of the Best Practice video, which also includes the program: Occupational Health and Safety for the Professional Fishing Industry, for \$35 (incl. GST).

For further information or to purchase a copy please contact:

South Australia: Danni Lum
T: 08 8272 7766
E: danni@corvel.com.au

Tasmania: Rodney Tregloggen
T: 03 6376 1800
E: rocklobsterexo@bigpond.com.au

Victoria: David Lucas
T: 03 5258 3719
E: davidlucas@swift.net.au

Board Members

Independent Chair
Roger Cotton

John Sansom
PO Box 195
ST HELENS TAS 7216
T: 03 6247 7284
E: tranmere@trumpnet.com.au

Rodney Trelloggen
Chief Executive Officer
Tasmanian Rock Lobster
Fishermen's Association
PO Box 195
ST HELENS TAS 7216
T: 03 6376 1796
F: 03 6376 1800
E: rocklobsterexo@bigpond.com.au
www.tasrocklobster.com.au

David Johnston
PO Box 259
PORT MACDONNELL SA 5291
T: 08 8738 2410
F: 08 8738 2296
E: davemjohnston@hotmail.net.au

David Lucas
Executive Officer
Victorian Rock Lobster Association
PO Box 7
QUEENSCLIFF VIC 3225
T: 03 5258 1701
F: 03 5258 3719
M: 0438 701 588
E: davidlucas@swift.net.au

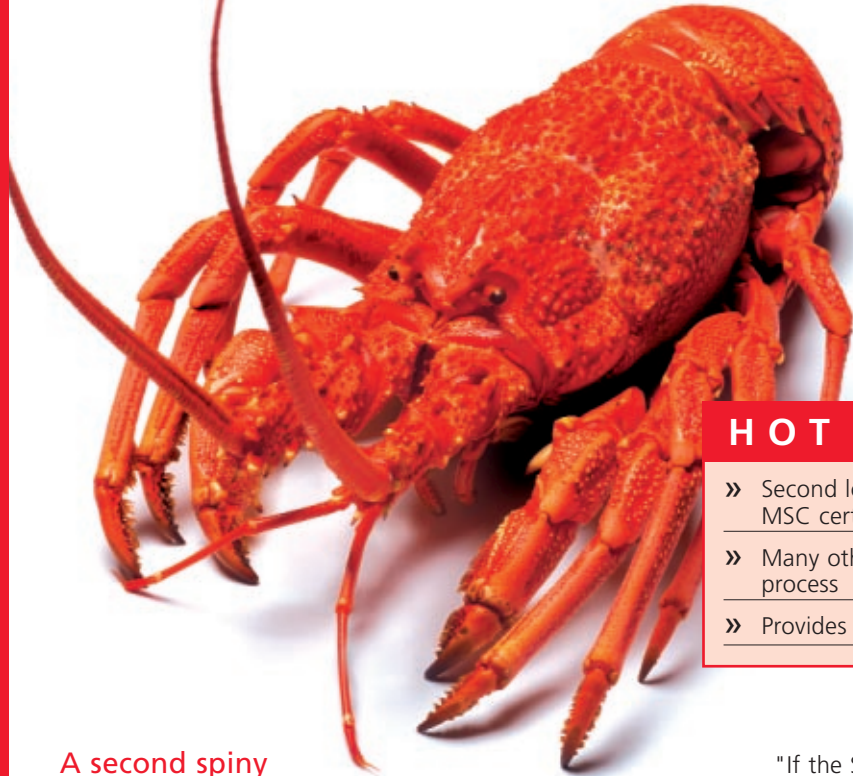
Andrew Ferguson
95 Cambridge Terrace
MALVERN SA 5061
T: 08 8357 7555
F: 08 8346 8729
E: andrew@fergusonaustralia.com

Kym Redman
PO Box 69
RENDELSHAM SA 5280
T: 08 8735 4241
F: 08 8735 4228
E: kymred@bigpond.com

Roger Edwards
Executive Officer
South Australian Rock Lobster
Advisory Council
Level 1, 16 Unley Road
UNLEY SA 5061
T: 08 8272 7766
F: 08 8272 7767
E: roger.edwards@corvel.com.au
www.seafoodsau.com



Marine Stewardship Council certification on the increase



HOT SPOTS

- » Second lobster fishery gains MSC certification
- » Many others in assessment process
- » Provides opportunities for SRL

A second spiny lobster fishery has recently been certified to the Marine Stewardship Council's (MSC) standard and is already experiencing demand from European retailers committed to supporting sustainably caught product.

MSC's Asia Pacific Regional Director, Duncan Leadbitter said the fishery, which operates off the west coast of Mexico, joins a recent flurry of fisheries that have been certified, including the South Georgia toothfish and the South African hake fisheries.

"In addition, 32 other fisheries are at various stages of the MSC assessment process," Mr Leadbitter said.

"The United States in particular has experienced a significant surge in interest and most recently, the world's first freshwater fishery in Sweden, has made a commitment to pre-assessment."

"This fishery joins a number of other Scandinavian fisheries that have started on the pre-assessment process," Mr Leadbitter said.

"Market demand is driving this and is relevant for those wanting a way to differentiate themselves in the European Union market."

"Industries which make a commitment to certification need to ensure that those in the post harvest sector are also committed to the process."

"Although there are benefits from being certified it is important to identify certified product in the market place so that the MSC's consumer outreach work can encourage consumers to selectively buy certified product."

Mr Leadbitter said that MSC had a presence at both the Brussels and Tokyo seafood shows with full time staff promoting certified product that bears the MSC logo.

"If the Southern Rocklobster industry decided to seek certification it would be vital for certified product to be identified in the market place."

"At the moment, here in Australia for example, consumers cannot differentiate between the various rocklobster for sale in seafood retailers."

"Not being biologists (or fishermen) the difference between western and southern rocklobsters and cooked eastern rocklobsters is not obvious."

Roger Edwards, Southern Rocklobster Limited Executive Officer, said that MSC may provide marketing opportunities for the industry.

"The Southern Rocklobster Limited Board is currently exploring the possibility of MSC recognition of the Department of Environment and Heritage assessment, with this perhaps leading to co-labelling," Mr Edwards said.