



Australian Southern Rocklobster Industry



Rocklobster got the 'look' to land on New York tables and catwalks

In a push to better manage industry risk exposure, Southern Rocklobster Limited (SRL) has been exploring the possibility of supplying premium foodservice markets, including top New York restaurants.

HOT SPOTS

- ⚡ SRL exploring new 'top end' markets for product
- ⚡ Consumers would be attracted to the 'look,' but need to be mindful of cost parameters
- ⚡ High profile events may be key marketing strategies

Gary Pattenden, the market research principal investigator with International Growth Specialists, a Sydney based division of Australia Business Limited (ABL) said that besides New York, research has focused on Dubai, London, Nepa Valley, Miami and Los Angeles, where restaurant spending is high and chefs are using new products to push the boundary of innovative menu creation.

"SRL recently hosted Adam and Brad Farmerie, co-owners of PUBLIC, a leading new-world restaurant based in New York specialising in Australasian cuisine," Mr Pattenden said.

"Disregarding traditional regional boundaries, PUBLIC's unique menu invites diners to explore an exciting new culinary terrain that blends traditional dishes from around the world into boldly-spiced, artistically crafted creations of taste and texture."

"As a point of differentiation, PUBLIC sources exotic produce and meats from New Zealand and Australia," Mr Pattenden said.

Brad Farmerie said Americans would be fascinated simply by the look of Southern Rocklobsters.

"This is one unique creature - it looks like an ancient creature that has stood the test of time," Mr Farmerie said.

"We absolutely love the product, however while New Yorkers would be fascinated by the look of Southern Rocklobster, we need to be mindful of the economics", Adam Farmerie said.

"The pricing structure of Southern Rocklobster would limit how it can be sold in high end restaurants - most likely to be a 'House Special' and as a shared entrée or appetizer for 3-4 people," Mr Farmerie continued.



"While consumers are willing to pay a premium for something exotic, there is also a need to be mindful of what restaurants can charge their customers."

"Upmarket restaurants in New York charge no more than US\$30 for their mains and Southern Rocklobster needs to fall within this cost structure."

Mr Pattenden said to further confirm these opportunities, SRL is currently working with ABL to gain feedback from other high end chefs in London and New York on the possibility of supplying into high end 'new world' restaurants.

"A significant part of the assignment will involve working with chefs to address how Southern Rocklobster can fit within the existing cost structures of the premium foodservice industry," Mr Pattenden noted.

"A key strategy for market entry into these premium markets will be prestigious targeted media events in order to capture the discerning palate."

"Perhaps the future will hold a New York fashion event featuring Ferraris, caviar, pearls and Southern Rocklobster from the pristine waters of Australia," suggested Mr Pattenden.



Above and top right: PUBLIC restaurant, New York

Strapless campaign continues to improve environmental practices

Owing to the support of the entire Southern Rocklobster (SRL) industry in South Australia, South Australia's SeaNet Extension Officer, Claire van der Geest, reports there are no plastic straps in the fishery.

Ms van der Geest said the initiative, hard work and continual efforts of all members of the SRL fishery had paid off, with all local bait suppliers and processors now packing their bait in strapless seal-friendly cartons.

"Questions as to the environmental consciousness of the industry have been raised recently, and although many suppliers and most of the

HOT SPOTS

- ⚡ No plastic straps remaining on bait from local suppliers
- ⚡ Some suppliers continue use of straps
- ⚡ Vigilance by industry will illustrate commitment to environmental best practice


industry have been removing straps for a number of years, this program has cemented the industry's position on protection of seals and meeting the MARPOL Convention," Ms van der Geest said.

"There are still some question marks over bait supplied from New Zealand and Tasmania and unfortunately, we were unable to secure guaranteed support from these companies."


Ms van der Geest recommends the following if your bait is supplied with straps:

- Inform your local SeaNet Extension Officer of the companies that are still supplying bait in strapped cartons.





WORN not STOWED!



Approved Product

Australian Standards
AS1512
Lic 1442

STORMY AUSTRALIA
33 Electra Place Mornington, Tas 7018, Australia Ph:03 6245 0443
Email: info@stormyaustralia.com www.stormyaustralia.com

- Discontinue the use of the bait from this company – this will demonstrate to the company, conservation groups and politicians our commitment to the protection of seals.
- Continue to ensure that all plastics, from all industry vessels are disposed of carefully on land

– we need to remain focused on environmental protection and best practice by the entire industry.

For further information on the program please call Claire van der Geest (SeaNet Extension Officer SA) on 0429 984 323 or email seanet@corvel.com.au.

Rocklobsters to halt the destruction by the sea urchin invasion into Tasmanian waters

Manipulating rocklobster populations may be an important component of the solution to the problems caused by the presence of long-spined sea urchin (*Centrostephanus rodgersii*) along the entire east coast of Tasmania.



A *Centrostephanus* in an algal bed off Maria Island (East coast, Tasmania)
Photo: Piers Dunstan

The sea urchin poses a considerable threat to the Tasmanian rocklobster fishery according to Professor Craig Johnson from the Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute (TAFI), because of its intensive grazing which creates extensive 'barrens' devoid of seaweed. There is no commercial fishing for either rocklobster or abalone on these urchin barrens.

"Barrens habitat is effectively bottom that is removed from the fishery, and this has the added effect of increasing effort in remaining areas suitable for fishing," said Professor Johnson.

"If the pattern of barrens formation on the east coast of Tasmania follows a similar pattern to that observed in NSW and the Kent Group in Bass

Strait, then researchers at TAFI have estimated that potentially up to 50% of shallow reef on the east coast could become barrens habitat."

"This expansion of barrens creates two distinctly different management challenges:

- (1) to prevent further spread of barrens habitat, and
- (2) to rehabilitate existing barrens."

"Ongoing research is providing clear evidence that rocklobsters are an important predator of this sea urchin, which has led us to propose a program to make use of existing trials of translocating rocklobsters from deep to shallow water reefs," continued Professor Johnson.

This is your life - 'Joelene' the lobster

It's hard to believe that a fisher could have a personal relationship with a lobster, however, professional Southend rocklobster fisher, Joel Redman has just that.

Joelene as she is affectionately known, or tag recapture number 17007 to South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) scientist, Peter Hawthorne, was originally tagged in October 1993 by Joel's father, Kym Redman and has subsequently been recaptured 13 times, including 12 times by the Redmans.

Joelene calls a small isolated patch of reef in 36 fathoms of water off Southend home and is obviously very happy there. She has not moved since being tagged as a spawny female initially measuring 105.5 mm in carapace length (CL), 11 years ago

In February 1994, she was caught by fellow Southend fisher, Peter Fabris, and had grown to 111 mm CL. She was subsequently landed five times in six days in January 1997 and stretched the callipers out to 119.2 mm CL.

HOT SPOTS

- ∴ Tagged lobster, Joelene, recaptured 13 times in 11 years
- ∴ Provides valuable data to rocklobster industry on growth rates and behaviour

Joelene was spared the trip to the surface in the 1998 season before notching up a hat-trick by crawling into Joel's pot three days in a row the following season. In October of the 1999 season, she had grown to 130.2 mm CL and was fully berried when landed.

She was captured next in January 2002 and had only grown 0.6 mm to 130.8 mm CL. Her most recent recaptures came in October of this



A tag similar to that used to track Joelene. Photo courtesy SARDI.

season when she visited the pot on three occasions over a nine-day period. Again, she was fully berried and had grown to 134.3 mm CL – 28.8 mm more than when she was first tagged back in 1993.

Mr Hawthorne said that tag recapture data provided valuable information on growth rates, movement patterns and mortality rates of lobsters in given areas.

HOT SPOTS

- ∴ Sea urchins spreading into the Tasmanian rocklobster fishery
- ∴ Urchins create barrens where no fishing can occur
- ∴ TAFI investigating translocating rocklobster to stop and reverse impact of urchins

"The work proposes to release lobsters from deep water onto barrens and in adjacent seaweed beds, and measure the dispersal of the lobsters, predation rates on sea urchins, effect on urchin populations and the response of seaweed cover to urchin mortalities as a result of predation by lobsters."

"This information is vital for an informed management response to this problem."

Queries can be addressed to Professor Craig Johnson, telephone (03) 6226 2582, email craig.johnson@utas.edu.au.

Industry welcomes compensation for displaced fishing

The South Australian Rock Lobster Advisory Council (SARLAC) welcomed the announcement by the South Australian Government to legislate compensation where commercial fishing may be displaced due to the declaration of a Marine Protected Area (MPA) in State waters.

Andrew Ferguson, SARLAC Director, said the announcement increases business confidence within the lobster industry and will have flow-on effects for regional communities and future investment in the industry.

"Removing the uncertainty around the security of access to fisheries in MPA 'areas of interest', is a critical step towards new investment and market development," said Mr Ferguson.

The commitment is similar to the legislative arrangements which are in place in Western Australia and aligns the State waters with the approach being taken in Commonwealth waters outside three nautical miles.

"Our industry has always considered the sustainability of the stock our top priority and has worked with scientists and members of the environmental community to achieve this," said Mr Ferguson.

"This commitment by the Government to fairly compensate for any displaced fishing will ensure lobster stocks are not threatened by the creation of MPAs."

HOT SPOTS

- ∴ SA government announced compensation for displaced effort
- ∴ Aligns with Commonwealth and WA legislation
- ∴ Critical for new investment and market development

"We have been pursuing legislation for many years following the substantial disruption and loss of confidence that resulted in the lobster industry with the Great Australian Bight Marine Park in the 1990s and this is a significant step forward."

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Tagging to differentiate product on the world stage

Southern Rocklobster Ltd (SRL) is working with Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and Primary Industries Research Victoria to develop a 12-month project to investigate value chain management and traceability in the Southern Rocklobster industry.

HOT SPOTS

- 12 month project to investigating tagging technologies
- Will allow product to be differentiated and traceable in the market place
- Demonstratable brand values will allow product to target high end markets

David Lucas, Victorian Rocklobster Association Executive Officer and SRL Director, said the industry had developed the Clean Green strategy to guarantee workplace safety, food safety standards, product quality, environmental sustainability and animal welfare.

"While the program can potentially underpin the values of a Southern Rocklobster brand, an important unresolved issue, is how Australian Southern Rocklobster can be differentiated from other species and traced through the value chain from the lobster pot to the consumer's plate," Mr Lucas said.

"A successful system may require individual tagging or labeling of animals using tamper-proof bar tags."



Heather Channon, DPI Principal Investigator, said the proposed project would investigate how such tags or labels will remain on each animal from boats (in seawater storage) until after cooking.

"This will require comparing existing technology from different companies," Ms Channon said.

"If successful, this will enable SRL to be branded, minimising risks of substitution and ensuring product quality."

"Ultimately, SRL wants to be able to present these brand attributes to the marketplace in a way that enables the product to be positioned at the ultra premium end of the market," continued Ms Channon.

"The ability to identify products in new markets, with demonstrated credence attributes, and trace the product through the value chain, will be key factors to the success of delivering products that meet market needs."

"In this project, traceback systems will be used as the backbone for delivery of a range of information about products to customers in the market."

The project will involve the following key activities:

- Review and document the SRL value chain for domestic and export markets:
- Identify and document the issues associated with each step in the value chain:
- Identify and evaluate appropriate traceability techniques for the SRL value chain:
- Demonstration of implementation of traceability system to SRL value chain

Cotton's Comment: SRL Communication and Confidentiality



The SRL Board is committed to building the value of your industry over time. To do this we are initiating relevant projects from market research to traceability, both covered in this edition. The Board has adopted strict governance and confidentiality procedures to protect valuable information and ensure that equal opportunity is provided to the industry to make use of

the research findings. We are currently working on a voluntary basis and do not have funding for mass circulars on a regular basis. Therefore we have decided to use this newsletter, a chairman's report which the state executive officers will manage and posting of information on the web site (still to be built), as the means of communicating with industry.

We are open to listening to anyone in the industry with development ideas, so please write to me care of any of the Board members if you have ideas you wish to raise. In closing SRL has had a good start to meeting the industry challenges.

The Board wishes you all a prosperous and happy 2005 and thanks you for your continuing support.