



WORKING IN THE FISH AND SEAFOOD INDUSTRY IN NORWAY

(Updated May 2017)



About the industry

The fish industry, including farmed fish, is the second largest export sector in Norway after oil/gas. It includes the traditional fishing, as well as fish farming and processing of all kinds of seafood at onshore facilities. Due to various factors, such as new technology and equipment, restructuring, international competition, quotas etc., the traditional fish industry has undergone a number of changes during the past few years. These factors have affected the Norwegian fish industry in such a way that production of fish and seafood products has increased, while at the same time the number of job vacancies in this sector has been reduced considerably.

The Norwegian seafood production consists of many different branches and has a great variety both in technology, production methods and profitability. It is therefore often difficult to discuss it in terms of one unit. In addition the variety in seasons and natural variations make it rather unpredictable. The traditional fish industry based on wild caught white fish is affected by the variation in access of resources and weather conditions which can lead to considerable changes both in volume and prices from one year to another.

2016 was the best year ever for Norwegian exports of all kind of seafood, both whitefish and farmed salmon and trout, and 2017 seems to be even better. The exported volume is reduced, but the value is continuously increasing. Nevertheless the need for new labour force is scarce.

Demand within this sector

Bigger trawlers producing fish on board and less production of fish fillet in Norway are factors that have characterized the traditional fish industry during the last decade. The number of processing factories has been radically reduced and so has the number of employees. Many factories now aim to produce all year round so the need for seasonal workers is by far not the same as it used to be. Therefore there is no urgent need for recruiting seasonal workers although the labour market for workers in the Norwegian fish industry still varies somewhat according to the time of year. Some may have different seasons of production according to the kind of fish being processed, availability etc. Production can also be dependent on weather conditions and quotas.

There are some jobs for skilled workers on a permanent basis involving work all year round, like in the fish factories which are spread all along the coast of Norway. In some places fish farming companies (mostly salmon) also have fillet production, but most of the work is in slaughtering and packing. The employers will be asking for people with former experience within fish production.

Important things to consider

The work can sometimes be tough and monotonous. For some periods you may find yourself doing a lot of overtime and having to turn up for work at unsociable hours. Employers are looking for reliable staff and will want you to stay at least a year unless otherwise indicated in the job advertisement. There are few, if any employers recruiting workers for summer jobs only.

Some employers rent out accommodation in shared housing, which means that you will have your own room, but will have to share a living room, kitchen and bathroom with other tenants. Some employers also have apartments available to let. The rent varies, depending on the standard of accommodation. Basic furniture and kitchen/cooking utensils will normally be available.

Since most work in the fish industry is to be found in the countryside where public transportation normally is very limited, you may need your own transportation to get from place to place.

Fishing vessels

The number of personnel employed on the fishing boats and the number of fishing vessels has been continuously reduced during the last years. It is not easy to get a job on a fishing vessel unless you speak Norwegian or a "Scandinavian" language, have former experience and somebody to recommend you. The jobs are mainly filled throughout an internal network. People on board live closely together and often under rough weather conditions for many weeks. This is not a job for everybody.

For jobs on fishing vessels you will need a special security certificate in order to work at sea, and you may have to cover the costs for this course yourself. The course lasts for a minimum of 40 hours and is organized on different locations alongside the coast. A list of schools/course centres offering approved safety training for fishermen and other relevant information for fishermen, you will find under "Related information" below. Normally you also have to provide a health certificate.

A list of 35 of the biggest fishing vessels in Norway can be seen on the internet. See Related information for links to the security certificate course and the list of fishing vessels.

There is an Illustrated Norwegian Ships list, vol 1,2 and 3 which is the most used guide to the Norwegian merchant – and fishing fleet, also with text in English. The books should be available in any Norwegian library and can also be bought via internet. Vol. 2 contains an overview of all registered fishing vessels longer than 15 m.

Related information

- www.fiskebat.no – main information in English (overview of fishing vessels only in Norwegian)
- www.yrkesfisker.no/en (information for fishermen and security certificate courses)
- www.skipslistene.no (Illustrated Norwegian Ships list)

Language, education and training requirements

The majority of employers wish to employ people who understand Norwegian and/or can make themselves understood in a "Scandinavian" language. Some companies also use English as part of the working language, so it would be useful to have a basic understanding of it. Working in the fish industry can involve operating various kinds of machinery and equipment, which if not handled properly, can be dangerous for you. So you will need some of these language skills in order to follow the necessary safety procedures and rules.

Norwegian language courses: there are various providers of language courses in Norway, and online courses. You can find most of them at [Skills Norway](#), the National Agency for Lifelong Learning.

In Norway, there are Journeyman Certificates for various positions in the fish industry. The employers also recruit non-skilled personnel, although experience is often desired. It is compulsory to show a health certificate stating that you have no chronic illness such as tuberculosis etc. before starting to work.

How to find work in the seafood and fish industry?

All the job vacancies published by The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) are on the European job mobility portal [EURES](#).

To find job vacancies directly on the website of The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV):

- Go to www.nav.no/stillinger
- Choose the category («arbeidsområde») "*Jord-skogbruk, fiske og matproduksjon*".
- Choose the category "*Fiske, fangst og oppdrett*" (fishing and fish hatcheries) and/or "*Matproduksjon og næringsmiddelarbeid*" (food processing).
- Choose type of position ("stillingstype") "Fagarbeider (fiskeindustri)" (Skilled worker, fish industry) or "Fiskeoppdretter" (Fishfarming) or "Fisker" (Fisherman)
- If you don't select any particular county, you will get the results according to your search criteria for the whole country.
- It is also possible to make a good search by writing the word "fiske" or "fiskeindustri" in the open search field called "Søk" Then you will get all the vacancies containing one of these words.

You may also contact the national contact point, NAV Service Centre EURES, to enquire about job vacancies:

- phone: (+47) 55 55 33 39 - Monday- Friday, 08:00 to 15.30 (CET)
- e-mail: eures@nav.no
- [chat](#): every Friday, 10:00 to 13.00(CET)

Most job vacancies in Norway are written in Norwegian. There are though job vacancies written in English, you can find them [here](#).

For short-term employment, most recruitment is done well before the start of the relevant season. The majority of these jobs are not publicly advertised, as companies tend to use their own network and contacts to recruit workers from other countries. Most factories try to keep a permanent all year round number of hands and supply with temporary workers via recruitment agencies to manage the peaks. Independent of season there will not be many vacancies advertised.

It is possible to send an open application to companies that might be of interest. There is no complete overview of companies within the fish industry, but the link www.io.no/fiskeforedling (only in Norwegian) will give you some kind of insight with the possibility to go directly to some companies' home sites for more information and sometimes with link to their vacancies.

The Yellow pages, www.gulesider.no, can also be used to look up companies within the sector by typing in the word "fiskeforedling" (fish processing) in the open search field.

Employers require a CV with your personal details and a description of your education, practical experience and a little about your general interests and hobbies.

Wages

As from April 2017 until April 2018 the basic hourly wage is set at NOK 176,70 for unskilled labourers/production workers (minimum wage for a normal working week of 37,5 hours). For skilled workers the minimum wage is NOK 184,10 per hour. In the fish industry exists a generally applicable collective agreement. This means that this agreement is incorporated in Norwegian law and applies as minimum requirements for everyone who works in the industry independent of nationality, employer, membership of trade unions and type of contract (hired-in, working for subcontractors, work for a Norwegian or foreign company, domiciled in Norway or in another country). In workplaces with shift work, a supplement to the hourly wage must be paid. This is 20 per cent of the minimum wage rate for two-shift work and 25 per cent for three-shift work. In addition there may be extra pay for overtime, production levels etc.

For some kind of work there may be piecework wages. These can either be paid per kilo or on a per unit rate and can vary from company to company. According to the relevant regulations, piecework wages must in any case be equal to the minimum hourly wage for the hours actually worked.

Trade Unions

In Norway trade unions play an important role in the workplace. Over 50% of the employees in Norway are members of a trade union. You may wish to contact a trade union to get more information about working the fish and seafood industry:

- United Federation of Trade Unions, www.fellesforbundet.no
- Among their members is the Norwegian Food and Allied Workers Union where many in the fish industry are organised, www.nnn.no/for-foreigners

Taxes, working conditions and relocation

Visit [Work in Norway, the official guide](#) to get step by step information about registering, paying taxes and working conditions.