



OBSERVER INFORMATION

In June 1985 the Government announced its intention to establish an Observer Programme to monitor the activities of vessels fishing in New Zealand's Exclusive Economic Zone.

Observers accompany vessels on fishing voyages to collect reliable catch effort data, biological information, and other information relevant to the operation of the Quota Management System.

The Programme began sea-going operations on 1 April 1986. In the first year Observers completed 5743 sea days during 105 voyages on 43 vessels, all fishing by the method of trawling. Last year Observers completed 11,294 sea days, covering fishing methods of trawling, bottom longlining, surface longlining, set netting, trolling and purse-seining. Requests for Observer coverage for the 2016-17 financial year is anticipated to be over 12,300 sea days.

There are sometimes two Observers on a vessel to enable 24 hour monitoring of the fishing activity. However, once experienced, Observers will undertake solo voyages. Vessel size and type may be such that only one Observer can be accommodated. Observers' standard agreements are usually 3-6 weeks at sea, though some agreements last for up to 3 months.

Observers are employed on an agreement basis, that is, each period of employment is covered by a separate agreement. Work availability depends on fishing activity during the year, and because of the spasmodic nature of fishing, MPI does not guarantee continuous employment as an Observer, and applicants should take this into account before joining the Programme.

Both men and women are recruited as Observers. Apart from the essential personal qualities (such as integrity, self-reliance, maturity and adaptability), applicants should have good data collection and report writing skills. Other factors (such as education, sea-going experience, foreign language ability, cultural experience and relevant technical qualifications) are taken into consideration at the time of selection.

Evaluation of each Observer's performance and suitability continues throughout their time with the Programme. Because of the nature of the service, MPI retains the right to not offer agreements to Observers at its discretion.

An applicant will be required to go through a thorough selection process. This may include a check with the applicant's nominated referees, participation at an assessment centre and an interview. Applicants must meet a prescribed medical specification and declare any convictions for offences against the law or any pending criminal charges.

Prospective Observers are required to successfully complete an intensive training course. This is normally held in Nelson and is a pre-requisite before commencing duties. The purpose of the course is to make Observers aware of sea safety and survival, and proficient in the collection of reliable catch effort and processing data. This includes quantifying and recording catch, losses and discards of all quota and non-quota species. Also included in the training course is species recognition, identification of marine mammals, discard approval, and Maritime safety and environmental monitoring.

Observers are also given a working knowledge of relevant fisheries legislation. However, Observers are not enforcement officers. If they suspect a breach of New Zealand fisheries legislation, they are obliged to document it. They may be required to give statements to Fisheries Officers and, on occasions, to act as witnesses in legal proceedings.

Within six months from the successful completion of the training course, new Observers will need to complete at least one training trip paired with an experienced Observer.

Observer positions are based in designated locations. Observers do not need to reside in the location their position is based, but will be required to present themselves at the Ministry Office where their position is based for each agreed period of employment as Observer. Travel to the Ministry Office where their position is based and any costs involved will be the Observer's responsibility. If, on occasions, the Ministry elects to have an Observer present themselves for an agreed period of employment as Observer somewhere other than where their position is based, the Ministry will either arrange travel, or reimburse actual and reasonable travel expenses (including airfares and taxi fares), from the airport where their position is based to the place of Employment Agreement signing and from the place of Employment Agreement conclusion to the airport where their position is based.

Conditions at Sea

Observers experience a wide variety of living conditions on fishing vessels. These will vary depending on the vessel's size, type and nationality. Observers are expected to eat meals provided by the vessel, but MPI may provide supplementary stores, depending on the type of vessel and trip duration.

Observers will experience a variety of sea conditions, and seasickness affects most Observers at some time during a trip, usually at the beginning. Most recover within a few days.

As "guests" on vessels, as well as being MPI representatives, Observers must be conscious of their image at all times. Maintain a friendly but professional demeanour, and above all be mindful of the diplomatic nature and sensitivity of your position.

Health and Safety

Observers at sea must be aware of the inherent dangers that exists in this environment and must conduct themselves in a safe manner at all times. MPI supplies protective clothing and safety awareness during initial training.

Remuneration

Observers are paid approximately \$252.73 (incl. 8.1% holiday pay) for each day at sea and approximately \$142.67 (incl. 8.1% holiday pay) for each day spent training, briefing, debriefing, in port, or travelling for the purposes of the Programme while on agreement.

Summary

Life on a fishing vessel will be unlike anything many will have experienced before. Common sense, maturity and adaptability will enable Observers to carry out their duties effectively.

Observers will often be working in hazardous and arduous conditions. Long hours, rough seas, extended periods at sea, and living in a foreign culture are all part of the Observers' experience. Most Observers reap the rewards of this satisfying and unique experience.

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OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT



DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES - OBSERVER

JOB TITLE: Observer

LOCATION: Auckland, Wellington, Nelson, Christchurch,
Dunedin.

RESPONSIBLE TO: Team Manager, Observer Services

1. Gather data on total catch, species composition, processing methods and processing results for all fishing activity during the voyage as specified in briefing.
2. Gather biological data and samples as requested during pre-trip briefings.
3. Record seabird and marine mammal sightings, behaviour and occurrence in the fishing areas and any incidental capture. Ensure that the animals are returned to the sea if still alive. Return dead animals as requested at briefings.
4. Maintain regular communication with the Observer Programme.
5. Furnish a thorough trip report, completed data forms, catch effort logbooks and samples as required at debriefing.
6. Ensure that all equipment issued is returned clean and in working condition.
7. Monitor and supervise "at sea" fish transhipments as specified during training and briefings.
8. Monitor and supervise inport unloads and fish transhipments as instructed.
9. Note any observed contravention of fisheries legislation and report these events to the Observer Services Team Manager.
10. Monitor, document and approve discards of ITQ fish species.
11. Other duties as instructed at briefings.

Personal

1. Tolerance, adaptability and reliability
2. Sound judgement
3. Superior interpersonal and written communication skills
4. Meet prescribed medical standards
5. Enjoy living and working with different cultures
6. Ability to work irregular hours for long periods
7. Ability to establish priorities and work procedures
8. Ability to work unsupervised and make own decisions
9. Neat and accurate recording of data
10. Commitment to the Observer Programme

Experience

1. Demonstrated skills in data collections and recording
2. Fisheries or biological background
3. Sea going
4. Foreign cultural and relevant language ability (Japanese, Russian, Korean)
5. Technical or related experience relevant to position

Result Areas

- Ensure reliable catch and effort data collection
- Monitor compliance with fishing regulations
- Maintain professional image of the Ministry for Primary Industries
- Provide a detailed trip report
- Carry out biological projects as required

Administrative

- Official Information Act
- Privacy Act
- Security declaration
- Code of Conduct
- Regulation 38 of the Exclusive Economic Zone Regulations 1978
- Fisheries Amendment Act 1986 and 1996
- Conditions of agreement of employment