

CAREERS for women and men in the TUNA INDUSTRY



If you're looking for adventure, you enjoy working in a team, and you care about the environment and the impact of climate change on our natural resources, a job in the tuna industry could be just the place for you. As a bonus, you will be helping to improve the livelihoods of Pacific Islanders.



Around 60 per cent of the tuna caught, canned and eaten around the world comes from the western and central Pacific—the world's biggest tuna fishery.

The job market in the tuna industry is growing fast and employers are keen to attract more young people in our region.

And with recent changes in regional policies, exciting new opportunities have opened up for people of all ages who are keen to create and manage their own businesses.

Women and men – equal opportunity

Over the past 20 years as the tuna industry has grown, so too has people's acceptance that careers in the industry are equally suited to men and women.

More and more training and development opportunities are opening up in tuna processing, in quality control, in research and in management, and the number of women taking up these opportunities is growing.

These women are continually demonstrating that there are no physical barriers to them doing the work.





Pamela Maru
senior fisheries officer at work



Pamela Maru was 19 when she started her career in fisheries. Now a Senior Fisheries Officer, Pamela “wears many hats”, among them a data manager and a science and research coordinator. She also monitors vessel locations on a computer.

There are only a handful of women involved in tuna-related fisheries science in the Pacific, and I'm proud to be one of them. I'd encourage young people to take a chance and head in to fisheries science or look at different careers relating to the tuna industry. There are lots of opportunities. You just have to keep a look out and go for it!

Pamela Maru,
Cook Islands Ministry of
Marine Resources

Getting started

The range of jobs available is diverse, from entry-level jobs in tuna processing to jobs requiring experience and a strong background in science or management.

The main employers are government departments of environment and marine resources, environmental NGOs (non-government organisations), academic institutions, tuna processing plants and local fish sellers.

To get started in tuna processing, whether you are male or female you need to be reliable, strong, of good character, and able to work hard.

Progressing your career

With ambition, some further skills, experience and qualifications, it is possible to progress from a job in fish processing to more senior roles.

The qualifications and experience you gain both on and off the job can lead you to more challenging and better paid jobs in fisheries science, quality control or management.

It is not unusual for people who started in tuna processing to rise to senior positions as fisheries officers and managers of fishery cooperatives.

Starting your own business

If you are unable to travel for work and would like to control what hours you work, there are great new opportunities in small-to-medium enterprises.

In the past, boat operators would sell or barter their ‘by-catch’ — fish species that they caught but were not targeting. Due to changes in regional policies, they now have to offload their by-catch in port. Many of these operators are now bartering their by-catch with local women for fresh vegetables. These women have been able to start their own businesses, processing fish and adding value by, for example, smoking and filleting fish.

By taking some short vocational courses in cooking, catering, preserving and quality management, you could grow a small-scale, fish-processing j into your own local enterprise.



Naitilima ('Tima') Tupou
Executive officer of the Pacific Islands Tuna Industry Association

Naitilima ('Tima') Tupou, from Tonga, is the Executive Officer of the Pacific Islands Tuna Industry Association. Tima began her career in an administrative role, appointed in 1999 as an office manager for Tongan longline company Maui Fishing.

Her career path led her out of administration to work in a diverse range of operational roles. She has been Fleet Manager for Sea Star Fishing, General Manager for South Pacific Resources (SPR) of Tonga, and Quality Assurance Manager for Niue Fish Processors Ltd.

Official recognition of Tima's experience in tuna came in 2007 when the government of Tonga nominated her as Tonga's official delegate to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

Learn on the job

You can develop your skills via on-the-job training in, for example, fisheries departments and canneries, or through regional attachments and workshops.

Some canneries will train you in how to work efficiently on the processing lines. They also offer training for supervisors and quality control staff who may work on the processing lines but have additional responsibilities.



Going higher

To be eligible for some of the higher level positions in the tuna industry, such as management or laboratory work for quality control, you will need qualifications.

Role	What you will do	Educational qualification
Fisheries management officer, offshore	Prepare plans for managing offshore fishery resources and ensuring the sustainability of the tuna species—one of our most important resources in the Pacific region. Assist with monitoring, control and surveillance activities.	Diploma or degree in fisheries management, information technology, or equivalent, depending on the role
Fisheries research officer, offshore	Undertake research on offshore fisheries resources. Prepare situation reports for management and licensing sections.	Diploma or degree in fisheries science, biology, ecology, or equivalent
Marine conservation officer	Contribute to the sustainability of our marine resources by working with government environment service, environmental NGOs and community groups to formulate conservation strategies for marine animals at risk, including mammals, reptiles, corals, fishes and invertebrates.	Diploma or degree in environmental science or management, marine biology or ecology
Fisheries extension officer	Work with communities to help them manage and monitor their fishery resources effectively, for the benefit of their livelihoods.	Diploma or degree in fisheries science or management, or a degree in social science
Quality assurance/control officer	Make sure food products meet standards set by both companies and regulatory authorities. Develop and review quality and safety policies. Manage audits by third-party inspectors. Train quality assurance personnel. Oversee the manufacturing and production process	Degree in a food-related discipline such as food science, microbiology, chemistry or food industry management
Quality control laboratory technician	Conduct laboratory analytical tests on food, water, food contact surfaces to see if they comply with both company and regulatory hygiene standards. Report non-conformities and recommend improvements.	Degree in food science, microbiology, chemistry, public health, or laboratory technology related courses
Production manager	Plan and organise production schedules. Oversee production processes. Assess project and resource requirements. Plan budgets, estimates and timescales with clients and managers. Determine quality control standards. Manage inventory and stock control. Schedule maintenance of equipment and facilities.	Degree in management with technical skills in food production operation or degree in food science, production/manufacturing engineering with management skills

Apply now

Contact your local representative to discuss your career options.

