

# A sea change in innovation

**New Zealand's seafood industry is well-placed to keep advancing beyond its core business into high-value products and processes, writes the new head of Seafood Innovations Ltd, Anna Yallop.**

The seafood sector, like many other New Zealand primary sectors, has phenomenal opportunities to grow the value of its products. I've seen this firsthand over the past four years while overseeing the Bioresource Processing Alliance (BPA), which focused on developing high value innovations from by-products derived from dairy, horticulture, seafood, meat, forestry and microbiological sources.

Across this wide range of sectors, it was fascinating to see the variety of opportunities coming out of the seafood sector and that's why I'm excited about my recent move into Seafood Innovations Ltd (SIL), a similar research programme, but one that focuses solely on adding value to the seafood industry.

In its time, the BPA worked with a large number of seafood companies, including Moana, Sanford, Okains Bay Seafood, Sealord, Kono, New Zealand King Salmon and North Island Mussels Ltd. Whereas the BPA focused wholly on finding higher value uses for by-products, SIL is tasked with increasing value, saving costs or enhancing product attributes by funding 50 percent of R&D projects. Research projects are

wide ranging, including solving challenges familiar to many companies, conducting work that capitalises on sustainability, genetics, nutrition or improving harvesting techniques. This is a fraction of the scope of work that can be undertaken and because of my experience across a wide range of cross-sector opportunities, I'm particularly interested in untapped areas ripe for exploration.

New Zealand has strong provenance when it comes to its primary produce. An interesting shift I've noticed is the investment that international companies are making to actively come to New Zealand searching for safe, healthy, high quality primary produce, often because their existing sources have lower perceived quality, or perhaps worrying safety issues.

New Zealand seafood companies are already leveraging a strong international reputation with their core products in existing and new markets. Interestingly, some local companies are also moving beyond this, creating new avenues of revenue via product offerings often far removed from traditional core business. Examples of this include Sanford's partnership

with Auckland-based company Revolution Fibres to develop nanofibre collagen ingredients for high value skin care products, Ocean Blue's use of paua shells in 3D printing developed by Scion, or New Zealand King Salmon's premium pet food range.

These are just a few examples of value being added to seafood raw material. It would be easy for the sector to stick to the products it knows best and is world-class at marketing, but that's why it's impressive to see companies find new ways to enhance their brands.

Entering new markets with innovative products that respond to emerging demand is brave and outside the comfort zone. As general manager of SIL, a key aspect of the role is building high trust relationships with companies. This opens the door to new products, processes or improvements, some of which may not have previously been on the radar. If this resonates with you, or you are interested in doing things differently in 2019, let's talk.

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*Seafood Innovations Ltd is a joint venture between Seafood NZ and Plant & Food Research.*



New Zealand King Salmon's premium pet food range. Picture, New Zealand King Salmon.



SIL's new general manager Anna Yallop.