



Marktverkenning Multipurpose Maritiem Ondernemen

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'From Fisherman to Multipurpose Maritime Entrepreneur' was one of the four long-term ambitions of the Fisheries Innovation Platform (2007-2011) – and it is still an ambition that InnovationNetwork is pursuing in the world of fisheries. The challenge is to broaden the fisheries business model to other seaborne activities and create a more diversified economic base.

Earlier InnovationNetwork reports show that the most obvious solution for fishing vessels in the Dutch situation is to focus on private and public marine research and nearshore activities. Marine research generally yields a lower return than offshore activities for the gas, oil and green energy sector (wind turbines), but it is a fast-growing market and makes less demands on vessel and crew. The offshore market yields a higher return, but places higher demands on vessel and crew. For this reason, this market is also taken on board in this report.

As part of the research entitled "Multipurpose seagoing platform – A vessel and fishing boat in one" (InnovationNetwork, 2013), a business case and calculation model were developed to help fisheries entrepreneurs form an initial idea of the costs and revenues given a specific combination of diverse maritime activities.

To further refine this business case and provide the arithmetical model with accurate data, the maritime consultancy Koers & Vaart B.V. – drawing on interviews with market parties, public sources research, and its knowledge of shipbuilding and maritime market segments – made an overview of the market segments, types of vessels, new shipbuilding prices, total costs, daily rates and returns for the various types of vessels and accompanying activities.

Conclusions and recommendations

Multipurpose maritime entrepreneurship not only calls for technological adjustments to ships and different competencies of the crew, but also new forms of entrepreneurship. Cooperation within the sector is also key to positioning the fisheries sector as an attractive provider of services and to build bargaining power vis-à-vis customers.

Offshore support for oil & gas – including diving, seismic support and wind farm support – is a market with interesting opportunities for multipurpose seagoing platforms. The prices are good. High demands are made on ship, crew and technical systems. But the entry threshold is not as high as is often thought. One operational challenge is that most activities and the highest prices occur in the summer season, which is also the best fishing season.

Technical systems such as Dynamic Positioning (DP), motion compensating (knuckle boom) cranes and offshore access systems absolutely offer added value in the offshore and wind farm support. The big question, however, is whether the utilization rate of these systems throughout the entire year justifies these investments.

A seagoing platform that can facilitate diving support activities is an interesting option. The fishing vessel winches, for instance, can be used for four-point anchoring. However, the ship must have sufficient crane capacity and deck capacity to make this possible. Wind farm construction also offers opportunities for vessels without DP or other complex technical systems, including searching for unexploded ordnance (UXO) and other research activities.

Though this market is significantly smaller, support activities for the government can also be profitable. The current austerity drive has made government more willing to cooperate with maritime businesses than before. The study also shows that such partnerships can yield substantial public cost savings thanks to the much more intensive use of units.

The recommendation is to elaborate the multipurpose seagoing platform concept in consultation with potential new users into a concrete design with accompanying functional and technical specifications. As this report centres on the fisheries sector's potential to develop new activities, fishing businesses are the only secured customer for the platform at this stage. This means that the investment cost-benefit analysis must fit in with normal fisheries operations.

A long-term commitment of the new user makes it possible to adapt the design to his specific needs. An additional advantage is that this gives the ship owner greater security for the finance. This new user

can also become a co-investor in the new platform and can increase the platform's annual capacity utilization rate.

Clear choices must be made at an early stage regarding crew requirements and the use of the platform. There is a tendency to want to use the multipurpose seagoing platform for all possible additional activities. In practice, however, the platform is more likely to be used for two or three additional activities over longer periods of time. This limits the retooling time and increases the annual capacity utilization rate.

Support with offshore oil and gas activities is attractive to start with, because of the current large demand in this market segment. Looking further ahead, low-cost wind farm maintenance also seems a promising proposition because of the growing price pressure in this segment and the expected cost effectiveness of the platform.

It was found that the offshore market offers scope for vessels with a length of 40 to 50 metres. The innovation challenge is to adjust the technology as currently installed on larger ships in an effective (and cost-effective) manner for relatively simple modular application on smaller ships. The recommendation therefore is to form partnerships with system integrators and suppliers of complex technical systems – such as cranes, winches, offshore access systems and propulsion systems – in order to look for alternative solutions for existing systems. A modular approach makes it possible to only install the technology necessary for the activity in hand, thus saving time and limiting the required deck space. This greatly improves the opportunities for using medium-sized vessels in the offshore segment and can further reduce the costs for end users.

Finally, government must ensure that regulations and procedures are sufficiently accommodative to enable such new combinations of fishing activities with other operations. The responsible authorities have indicated their willingness to discuss appropriate measures.

