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Tri Marine and National Fisheries Development Announce Commencement of Fishing Operations for the Solomon Island flag purse seiner Solomon Sapphire



BELLEVEUE, Wash. (February, 17, 2017) – Tri Marine and National Fisheries Developments (NFD) announced today that the Solomon Island flag tuna purse seiner Solomon Sapphire is ready to go fishing after a lengthy refurbishment in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, and at NFD’s base in Noro, Solomon Islands.

In June 2016 the NFD board approved the purchase of the former U.S. flag fishing vessel. This change from U.S. flag to Solomon Island flag is consistent with the policy of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) to increase local participation in the tuna fishery and further underscores Tri Marine’s commitment to supporting island-based economies where the tuna resources are harvested.

Former PNAO CEO Dr. Transform Aqorau expressed his delight in response to the news that the Solomon Sapphire was going fishing. In a statement, Dr. Aqorau said:

“The PNA and, indeed, the Pacific Island Countries have long envisioned fishing done by the Pacific Island countries themselves. NFD is perhaps the only company in the Pacific Islands that is fulfilling the vision to see a truly integrated domestic tuna company in which the EEZ regime and the domestic economy are inextricably linked. As a Solomon Islander and being from Noro, and having grown up with the industry there, I am particularly proud of this development and the addition of the Solomon Sapphire to the Solomon Islands purse seine fleet. I congratulate Tri Marine, NFD and SolTuna on their foresight and commitment.”

The Solomon Sapphire is expected to fish primarily in Solomon Island’s exclusive economic zone (EEZ) to facilitate delivery of its tuna catch to SolTuna. The Solomon Islands Ministry of Fisheries and

Marine Resources, PNA, and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission apply overlapping regulations to protect the tuna resources that the Sapphire will harvest.

The Solomon Islands purse seine and pole and line fisheries achieved Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification for sustainability in July 2016, allowing this and other NFD vessels to deliver MSC certified sustainable tuna to SolTuna.

Locally managed, NFD and SolTuna employ over 2,000 Solomon Islanders and represent one of the country's largest private sector employers.

“We are anxious to receive the catch from this beautiful boat. Shortage of raw material has had a negative impact on our business this past year,” said Adrian Wickham, managing director of SolTuna. “We are grateful for the support and hard work of the various Solomon Islands government agencies, especially the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, in facilitating and approving the purchase, registration, licensing and certifications of the Solomon Sapphire.”



Renato Curto, CEO of Tri Marine congratulated NFD's operations manager, Tony Sarcich, and his team for their success preparing the Solomon Sapphire to join the NFD fleet and pass all of the inspections and audits necessary for the vessel and its catch to qualify for export to the EU market.

NFD is the only supplier of tuna to SolTuna because the catch from their boats has Solomon Islands origin and EU authorized sanitary numbers. About 70 percent of SolTuna's production is exported to the EU. The remainder goes primarily to the domestic market where SolTuna's brands are a mainstay of the local diet. SolTuna's iconic Solomon Blue and SolTuna Chili Tuna products are also exported to the region.

“We are proud of what we are doing in Solomon Islands and we welcome the Solomon Sapphire to the integrated operations of NFD and SolTuna,” Curto said. “The catch from this vessel will help SolTuna increase production and employment. If all goes well, we will consider additional boats for Solomon flag under NFD's operation.”



Solomon Sapphire in the Papua New Guinea Dockyard in Port Moresby where it was refurbished from August to December 2016.



Solomon Sapphire alongside the SolTuna wharf in Noro, Western Province getting ready for its first fishing trip as part of the NFD Solomon Islands fleet

ABOUT TRI MARINE

Tri Marine is a recognized leader in fishing, processing and distributing high-quality tuna products to the world's markets. The company focuses on quality, sustainability, innovation and customer satisfaction. As a socially responsible operator, Tri Marine has chosen to invest in the communities closest to fishery resources. Tri Marine is committed to all of its customers, suppliers and stakeholders for the long term. National Fisheries Developments and SolTuna are part of the Tri Marine Global Group of Companies. For more information, visit www.trimarinegroup.com.