

The cornerstone

Can a fishcake really create stability and predictability? Indeed it can – that’s exactly what’s happened in Stamsund.

One of many postcard motifs from the “inside” of Lofoten, with the mountains plunging into the Vestfjord and a handful of holms and skerries encircling the old fishing village. Fishing has been the most important source of income here for generations, and the villagers have experienced both good times and bad. In 2016, Lerøy purchased Stamsund’s fish-processing business, and today the factory alone employs around 100 people. That’s equivalent to 10% of Stamsund’s population.

“There’s no doubt that the factory is important to Stamsund as a local community: it’s the cornerstone business in the village,” explains factory manager Steffen Andersen. In autumn 2018, Lerøy started up a project that has consolidated the business’s position and importance:

“We rebuilt the entire factory. The external walls are the same but everything inside is new or has been modernised. And in April 2019, we introduced a new dual-production system in the factory, with filleting on the one side and fishcake production on the other. This ensures year-round use of the facility, and is important for people working here,” Andersen emphasises.

Value generation and less food waste

Several dozen tonnes of fishcakes now leave the factory every single week, to be transported to Norwegian grocery chains such as Kiwi, Spar, Meny and Nærbutikken. Wild-caught Norwegian cod, saithe and haddock make up between 52 and 80% of the fishcakes – and Andersen says that an unusually large number of fishcakes were eaten in Stamsund last spring:

“Well, we had to work out both the best

recipe and the most efficient way of making the fishcakes, so we handed out many different fishcakes locally during the trial phase. After all, we didn’t want to throw them away,” Andersen smiles. Lerøy takes food waste seriously. One of the Group’s sustainability goals is to use more of its raw materials and, in concrete terms, it is working to increase the edible percentage of current food waste by a full 50%. This is why making fishcakes is a smart solution.

“Yes, we’re using much more of the fish now than before. Everything that is left after the fish has been filleted and all the innards, skin and bone have been removed is used as raw material for fish farce, which in turn becomes fishcakes,” explains the factory manager.

Something completely new

The employees are trained to work at all stages of the production chain, so that they can rotate both internally on the production line and between filleting and processed fish.

“The idea behind this is twofold. Firstly, purely in terms of ergonomics, it’s good for the employees to be able to vary their working position. Secondly, we’re building a more robust workforce, making us more flexible and able to adjust production according to the supply of raw materials. Now that we have a more automated production system with new, modern machinery, we also require different skills from our employees. Previously, we had many manual operations, but now they need a greater understanding of machinery. It has been a challenging transition for many, but I feel we’re on the right track now,” says Andersen.

Large parts of the production are automated, but many tasks still have to be done manually, for example weighing the raw material for the fishcakes, and preparing and operating the machines.

"It's been fantastic to be able to invest in, build and create something completely new in the Lerøy context. After all, we haven't been involved in this type of production before, so it's been an exciting challenge for us. It's brought us closer together too, at the same time as really giving us chance to show that we're working in accordance with one of Lerøy's core values: being creative."

Important part of the strategy

The Lerøy Group has invested heavily in processing and expanded factory capacity along the coast

of Norway in recent years. Ivar Wulff, COO Sales and Distribution, explains why:

"Part of our strategy is specialisation for the various factories we have in North Norway. Previously, they have been fairly similar, both in terms of what they produced and the markets they served, resulting in fairly low profitability. Now we're working instead on specialisation, so that these factories make specific products that are aimed at both a national and international market. The investment in Stamsund is in line with this strategy," says Wulff.

