

The Sonar Has Made Us More Productive

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The domestic tuna fishing fleet in New Zealand numbered 120 boats just a few years ago. Today, it's reduced to 40 or 50. Quotas are blamed for the reduction, and it is becoming more difficult for smaller operations to compete. Sonar helps a lot says Robert Aitken, skipper of the 25-meter long-liner F/V Stromboli. The company he works for, Gisborne Fisheries Ltd. in Gisborne, New Zealand, operates five boats and his is the only long-liner fishing mid-water. With his encouragement the company installed a WESMAR sonar 110 series, on the Stromboli. Aitken knew what sonar could do from his experience several years ago as sonar operator onboard a purse seiner. "I immediately recognized this new WESMAR could do a lot more," said Aitken.

His first trip out he said he was watching red dots 'like squid' on the surface. He shot the gear and pulled in one ton of big eye tuna. It was a great beginning for the veteran skipper. The success immediately reestablished his excitement about sonar.

"There is a lot I don't know about this unit. A lot of improvements have been made. The power of the system has not been lost on him. "With this one you can track down one or just a few fish! I'm still playing with the TVG, the pulse settings and learning how to interpret all the screens, but I've used it enough to know that it's a 'handy machine' and that it has improved our productivity." He says it already has given him a "bit of an edge on the other boats." He admits he would not want to go fishing again without it.

Aitken has many examples of the edge the WESMAR sonar has given him. It's helped with bottom fishing. "We were fishing blue nose and watching a school move up and down...



Skipper of the 25-meter long-liner Stromboli fishing off the coast of New Zealand says his WESMAR sonar has already improved his fishing.

in a feeding frenzy, which is a good time to shoot the gear. It was a good decision, we shot the gear and brought up a ton. Aitken and his four-person crew are looking for big value fish. With the new WESMAR sonar he says they can be more efficient. "I'm very impressed with this sonar. We used to shoot 30 to 40 miles every night; now we average 20 to 25 miles. We get in an area and track the bait school so we know when to shoot. Before we had a lot of wasted shots."

The Stromboli fishes yellow fin, albacore, and swordfish in the summer. In the winter the southern blue fin tuna and bigeye is their target and they average 80 kilos a fish. Then, about the end of February, they go after the northern blue fin, the real trophies, at an average of 200 kilos per fish.

The WESMAR 110 series sonar was sold to Gisborne Fisheries by WESMAR's New Zealand agent, Advance Trident Ltd., and was fitted in Tauranga by Rutherford Marine electrical. The installation was done in the water after the sea

