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Aquaculture Alliance Supports Industry with Workforce Strategy

There's no shortage of work in the Aquaculture industry sectors of Mussel, Oyster and Finfish. All three sectors are hiring, and despite the availability of work, filling those positions isn't easy. That's something the Prince Edward Island Aquaculture Alliance hopes to change.

The Alliance, which serves as the umbrella organization for all three sectors on PEI, recently launched a workforce strategy to help its membership tackle the recruitment and retention of employees. The non-profit organization is now seeking funding and partnerships to support its efforts.

Jobs in the Aquaculture sectors range from working aboard a boat, physically farming the sea, to quality assurance and research in a lab.

"Aquaculture is the fastest growing food production system in the world," said Peter Warris, Director of Projects and Industry Liaison with the PEI Aquaculture Alliance. "The work is varied and rewarding, and there's a lot of innovation happening with so many of our members passionate and dedicated to what they do."

The PEI Aquaculture Alliance retained the services of CollaboVantage Consultants to help identify and prioritize solutions for workforce and human resource issues within the Aquaculture industry. The resulting workforce strategy builds on a labour market analysis completed in 2014 and a human resources survey completed last winter.

The data notes many positives to working in the Aquaculture industry. Approximately 77 per cent of respondents identified that they offer incentives and benefits like health, dental and RRSP plans, in addition to wages. Some also include attendance incentives, vehicle allowances, gift cards, and equipment and production bonuses. Many of those same businesses reported offering increased wages, reduced hours, and increased training over the past two years in an attempt to recruit more people.

Denna Keating, Director of Finance and Operations for the PEI Aquaculture Alliance, believes some issues with recruitment stem from a lack of understanding that full-time, year-round employment is available alongside seasonal work.

“We need to increase the awareness,” Keating said. “Our research shows that most employers have been relying on word-of-mouth for recruitment. We need to look beyond our traditional pools of labour and expand how we’re advertising jobs. We also need to look at why some employees leave the industry and what we can do to make them want to stay.”

Some of the goals outlined in the workforce strategy include enhancing employers’ capacity to offer incentives by exploring group benefits; sharing best practices for recruitment; increasing training and certification opportunities for employees; and creating pilot projects to tackle some of the issues identified by employees as barriers to working in the industry, such as transportation and hours of work.

The Alliance is also in the process of forming a Workforce Steering Committee, looking for partners and interested industry participants.

“We’ve already begun meeting with potential partners and talking to industry groups about their training and recruitment needs,” said Keating. “We are waiting on potential funding, but this isn’t something we can allow to become stagnant. We want to do everything we can to help the Aquaculture industry now and into the future.”

For more information about PEI Aquaculture Alliance, visit: <https://www.aquaculturepei.com>
For the latest Aquaculture job opportunities, visit:
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