

Leaders of tomorrow

Profiling young professionals in the South African fishery

In two short years, Viking Fishing's Xolani Phaya (right) has dramatically expanded his horizons. Not only has the young professional rapidly climbed the ranks at Selecta Sea Products, he has also completed a series of training courses that have equipped him to progress in the field of quality management.

Xolani's career at Selecta Sea Products – Viking Fishing's processing factory in Philippi – began in 2015 when he attended a Generic Management learnership at the factory. The learnership is a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level five qualification that consists of theoretical and experiential training. It was during his experiential training, when he was working as a quality controller (QC) on the fish processing line at Selecta, that Xolani's managers realised he was newly graduated with an Honours degree in Environmental and Water Science from the University of the Western Cape (UWC). Xolani's university qualification was a perfect fit for Viking Fishing and as soon as he completed his learnership, he was employed on a full-time basis as a QC.

Today Xolani is head of Quality Assurance at Selecta Sea Products and glad that he had the opportunity to participate in the Generic Management learnership, saying that it helped him with the transition from university to a working environment.

"The course continues to help me with many different aspects of my work, such as team management," he said.

Xolani's learning has continued. After completing advanced HACCP training and ISO 22002-1 training – courses that have helped him to understand and



implement a stringent HACCP programme at Selecta – Xolani was nominated by his managers to attend a one-month training course on processing and trade of aquatic products for developing countries. The course was presented at the Shandong Foreign Trade Vocational College in the eastern Chinese port city of Qingdao and Xolani's trip was sponsored by the Government of China and facilitated by the South African Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Xolani joined a group of 35 young professionals from Cuba, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Suriname and South Sudan who participated in the course. Just by being part of this multinational group, Xolani gained valuable insight into the global fishing and aquaculture industries.

"The training exposed me to various technologies and techniques used in processing and freezing fish around the world, and it sparked my interest in aquaculture," he said.

Xolani is excited about the fact that Viking Fishing is a diversified fishing company with growing interests in aquaculture. Viking Aquaculture operates a large abalone farm near the remote village of Buffeljags on the Cape south coast, and also runs oyster and mussel

farms in Saldanha and Lüderitz in southern Namibia. A number of trout farms also form part of the Viking Fishing stable.

"I hope I will continue to grow into a strategic business position within the Viking Fishing Group," said Xolani. "I would like to become involved in Viking Aquaculture so that I may learn about the farming operations and contribute my knowledge of quality assurance to the development of the farms' biosecurity programmes."

An academic qualification in aquaculture may also be on the cards. Xolani recently applied for a scholarship to complete a Master's degree in aquaculture at the Nanjing Agricultural University in the Chinese city of Nanjing. Should he be accepted for the Master's programme, Xolani will remain an employee of Viking Fishing for the duration of his studies.

Xolani is 26 years old and says that this is the right time of his life to improve his academic qualifications and prepare himself for a long career in the seafood business. If he wins the scholarship, he is ready to embark on his studies in China, a step that will require big adjustments but will undoubtedly bring significant rewards.



52 members unlocking the value of the Cape hake resource

SADSTIA South African Deep-Sea Trawling Industry Association