

Friendly isles, teeming waters

On the Pacific Sunrise, a local crew reaps the benefits of local fishing waters



Arriving in the Kingdom of Tonga in 1773, Captain James Cook baptized it “the friendly isles” for the warm welcome he received. Little did he know the island chiefs intended to kill him but couldn’t agree on a plan!

Today, the Tongans are genuinely welcoming — as are the local waters. Tonga stretches over some 800 kilometers (500 miles), with as many as 176 islands surrounded by crystal clear waters teeming with fish including marlin, swordfish, and tuna. But as foreign fishing vessels are spilling into Tongan waters, local fishing companies must upgrade their equipment to compete.

Experience makes the difference. Eddie Palu of Atlantis Fisheries Pty Ltd based in Nuku’alofa, explains how they make a difference: “We know the waters, have the experience, and use quality, tailor-made gear and machinery. Nevertheless, the physical isolation of Tonga poses challenges; it’s hard to get parts, gear, and technical expertise.”

Yellowfin tuna are an important commercial tuna species, especially for the raw sashimi market. Reported sizes have ranged as high as 2.4 meters (94 inches) in length and 200 kilograms (440 pounds) in weight.



Engine Model	PowerTech 6135AFM75
Displacement	13.5L
Rated Power	429 kW (575 hp) @ 2100 rpm
Cylinders	6
Aspiration	Aftercooled
Distributor	Marine Diesel Pty. Ltd. Capalaba QLD 4157 +07 3390 3633 steve@marinediesel.net.au www.marinediesel.net.au

The *Pacific Sunrise* is repowered and ready to reap the benefits of the local catch.

Palu is committed to ensuring that the Tongans reap the benefits of the local catch. A member of the Economic Growth Committee and the National Fisheries Council, he aims to raise funding to put idle fishing boats back in action and upgrade domestic wharf facilities.

Reliability and availability are critical in isolated Tonga. Palu’s own 22-meter (72-foot) fiberglass longliner, *Pacific Sunrise*, was custom-built by Westcoaster in Western Australia. Palu and his crew use it to fish mainly for yellowfin and bigeye tuna, swordfish, marlin, and mahi-mahi. “We’re out at sea six days a week, up to 18 hours a day. Depending on the season, we can go out between 40 and 400 nautical miles (74 and 740 kilometers).”

Last year, Palu chose to repower his *Pacific Sunrise* with a PowerTech 13.5L engine, because it is robust and has the 447-kW (600-hp) power band rating he was wanting. The engine drives a 4-blade Veem propeller via a Twin Disc MG5114 gearbox.

The support from local John Deere marine engine distributor Marine Diesel Pty Ltd was key. “They could deliver the right power and size of engine very quickly, and came to Tonga to assist with installation and commissioning. They were always available to answer any technical questions by phone and had all supporting spare parts in stock. We were very pleased with their professionalism, expertise, and efficiency.”

After five months in operation, the vessel and its engine have proven reliable and fuel efficient. Palu’s regular cruising speed is 8.5 knots at 1400 rpm, with a fuel consumption of approximately 38 liters (10 gallons) per hour. With the right quality, power, and support, the entire crew can look forward to many more successful hours in the teeming waters of Tonga.

Palu was very pleased with the quick delivery and installation of the 429-kW (575-hp) PowerTech engine.

