

SAILING TO THE FUTURE

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” This African proverb perfectly captures the way Omer-Decugis & Cie group has developed over the decades— a strong development made possible by professional and trusted partnerships like the one with Seatrade.

Seatrade is a global leader in specialised refrigerated shipping and logistics. Their Always.Moving.Forward.motto is embodied by delivering not just quality and reliability but also a commitment to equality.

At Toamasina Port in Madagascar, buzzing with excitement over the lychee season, Société Internationale d'Importation (SIIM), the Omer-Decugis & Cie group's subsidiary, was honoured to meet Fenna Heleen van Velzen. The young woman, a maritime cadet aboard the Atlantic Klipper, a Seatrade vessel, shares about her journey just a few hours before sailing to Europe with the first lychees of the season.

The Atlantic Klipper vessel sits majestically at the busy Toamasina Port in Madagascar, waiting to be loaded with the first tasty lychees of the season. It's been an annual appointment between Société Internationale d'Importation (SIIM) and Seatrade's vessel since SIIM and Seatrade started their strategic partnership encompassing the Madagascar lychees to Europe, after bananas and pineapples from Ecuador. The proud vessel is preparing to set sail for Europe, full of the exotic pink fruits, with a fresh recruit on board—ready to break barriers in an industry still largely dominated by men.

Fenna Heleen van Velzen, a third year maritime student, has been on board for the past three months exploring the excitement of a marine merchant's life. She is the only female cadet on the Atlantic Klipper and is one of a few women studying in the Maritime Officer Bachelor Programme at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences.

“It's the adventure and curiosity about the world that brought me here, shares the Dutch woman with a radiant smile. I was also fascinated by the technical aspects of maritime work and the international life this career offers.”
Life aboard the Atlantic Klipper is far from monotonous. Fenna's days are packed with responsibilities that bridge



Fenna with Vincent Omer-Decugis, Chairman and CEO of Omer-Decugis & Cie at Toamasina Port

both technical and navigational tasks. From assisting the captain in monitoring marine traffic and maintaining radio communication to tending to the engine room's meticulous demands, she is learning the intricacies of life at sea.

“I've earned more and more responsibilities over the past three months, and I love it,” Fenna says. Her colleagues, experienced sailors with Filipino and Dutch origins, have welcomed her as one of their own. They've become mentors, sharing not just knowledge, but the camaraderie of life on the water.

Fenna relishes the challenges that come with her work. Her favourite stretch of sea? The bustling English Channel. “It's like a highway for vessels,” she explains, her eyes lighting up. “You really need to pay attention because it can get so dense.”

The young cadet's internship marks the changing tides in the maritime industry. SIIM is proud of its long-term partnership with Seatrade, a global shipping company that actively encourages women to join the field where they remain significantly underrepresented. Together, they are not just moving fruits and vegetables across oceans—they're moving barriers. “Not every company



In the bridge



In the engine room

gives women a chance in this field, which is often seen as a men's sector," Fenna comments. "But at Seatrade, I'm treated like any other crew member. I'm given the same opportunities, the same responsibilities. Seatrade has opened up a new world of opportunities for me."

As the white vessel loads its precious cargo of Malagasy lychees, Fenna takes pride in ensuring their careful storage. "These lychees are a special fruit. They require precise temperature control and secure packaging. Knowing how much European consumers love them and how vital they are to the Great Red Island's economy, I feel honoured to be their guardian."

Growing up just 10 minutes away from the beach, her fascination with the sea began early. Now her childhood dream of exploring regions and people through marine navigation feels more tangible. After another three months with Seatrade, Fenna will return for her final year

of studies. This first dip of the marine life has affirmed the 20-year-old woman's ultimate goal: becoming a captain of Chief Engineer.



Fenna at the arrival of the fresh lychees at Sète

While the Atlantic Klipper sails toward Europe, carrying its precious cargo and the hopes of a young cadet, Fenna Heleen van Velzen is charting a course not just for herself, but for the future of women in maritime. Fenna firmly puts it, «Marine merchant is my job, but it's my life too." SIIM is proud to stand alongside Seatrade in this social evolution, supporting Fenna's groundbreaking journey at sea. Godspeed to her as she sails toward a bright future.

ABOUT SEATRADE

Seatrade is an international shipping company with a global footprint. We are a market leader in specialized refrigerated shipping and logistics. With our Fast, Direct and Dedicated concept, Seatrade customers can count on timely delivery of their produce, ensuring the longest possible shelf life and least possible food wastage in the full logistic chain. At Seatrade, we understand that keeping a schedule and delivering cargoes on time are instrumental in keeping your business successful.

Our globally established group of companies has its head office in Curacao and comprises a world wide network of offices which service our clients both locally and globally:

- Seatrade Groningen B.V. is a leading professional ship manager for container vessels, tankers, bulkers, reefers and juice carriers, located in Groningen, The Netherlands. Clients can expect the highest quality ship management that extends over various disciplines. Through module based ship management, the company provides tailor-made solutions to meet specific customer demands.
- Seatrade Chartering B.V. in Breda, The Netherlands and GreenSea N.V., Curacao (a joint venture with Green Reefers, Norway) and its agent GreenSea B.V. in Antwerp, Belgium, commercially operate a large fleet of specialised container and reefer vessels and freezer fish carriers. They schedule, supervise and coordinate the vessels' voyages while keeping the customer involved throughout the shipping process.
- Seatrade's world wide network of representing offices, agencies and the crewing agency Avior with offices in the Philippines and Russia, offer a great variety of value added services locally and complete the full scope of logistic services that Seatrade offers its customers.
- Our experienced staff, many of whom former seafarers, know all about challenges and how time and cost sensitive shipping can be. Highly committed to our customers, working closely together and sharing responsibilities.

We are Always. Moving. Forward.

ABOUT OMER-DECUGIS & CIE

Omer-Decugis & Cie is a family-run group founded in 1850, specialising in fresh fruit and vegetables, particularly exotic produce, for European consumers. With expertise in the entire value chain, from production to import, as well as specific know-how in ripening, the Group markets its fruit, mainly from Latin America, Africa and Europe, through all distribution networks (supermarkets and hypermarkets, out-of-home catering, specialised distribution and fresh-cut). Committed to sustainable agriculture that respects the local environment and people, the Group achieved an 80/100 rating in the Ethifinance ESG Ratings 2023 campaign, underlining the maturity of its ESG approach. Based at Rungis Market, Omer-Decugis & Cie had sales of €247.4 million on 30 September 2024, representing more than 160,000 tons of fresh fruit and vegetables distributed.