

## **KPI MLC Information Notice MLCIN-January-2013** **(MLC challenges with catering management on board)**

The MLC will enter force on 20.Aug.2013. There are many aspects of MLC enforcement on board ships & within the shipping industry. If we look at the convention from an ordinary seafarer's view; the questions asked may be very limited & quite a few.

The main thing to worry is the wages; the sailors ask that if the pays are going to be better or the allotments more regulated or not. The other query is that if the food is going to change a lot or not.

The following notes raise concern about the catering matters which also cover the food & rationing problems.

A) Certification: So far very few of the local shipping government regulatory bodies issue a certificate validating the training imparted to the catering staff under MLC guidelines. There also seems to be no government recognised establishments which carry out a valid certification course themselves.

This may become a problem. Some of the administrations have a history of taking care of such training & certification for catering staff; mostly the cooks; for passenger ships or even the ordinary freighters, but many have not taken this point very seriously. In some companies you can see that this department on board has been neglected. It must have been due to the fact that the flags have been reluctant about. There are cooks with carpentry or fitter back-grounds & many saloon staff who are partially unfit ex-Abs & OSs. It is important to remind ourselves that this can no longer be the case.

B) Quantity: With international market looming under recession and ship owners complaining about escalating costs, more and more pressure

is being mounted by them to the various ship managers & manning agencies to reduce the costs of running their vessels. One of the primary areas of concern is rising food cost, although the prices of food globally is on the rise still the budgets of feeding onboard has remained the same for many years. The costs of other catering supplies have also risen high. Many cleansing agents/detergents or husbandry items are much more expensive than a few years ago. With MLC regulation guiding many aspects about catering management on board, it may be nearly impossible to maintain the budgets and abide by the requirements.

C) Quality: The quality of catering stuff; mainly food is going to be a great challenge. We are obliged to satisfy various nationalities & religions with respect to food & there will be various expectations concerning & definitions of "decent" and or "reasonable" for the catering services. It is obvious that this area is also related to the budget & costs but on the other hand a proper & intelligent management may be able to furnish a better outcome with the same amount of money spent.

***Different approaches & attempts are demanded. We might have somehow been catering & feeding the seafarers, but we have to compare & contrast what we do with the regulations now. We must consult the nutritionists & trained caterers to abide by the MLC. A raise in the budgets would surely be a good start!***