These two projects, supported by the Fisheries Diversification Program (FDP), involved firstly seeking new seal fur markets and secondly, purchasing new fur tanning equipment. Both these projects fit well with FDP’s economic mandate to create long-term employment and capitalize on opportunities outside traditional fishing pursuits.

Background
Atlantic Marine Products Inc. is dedicated to the development, manufacturing and marketing of seal products. They operate a landing and processing facility at Catalina, Trinity Bay, including a seal oil refinery which produces seal oil capsules for a growing health market. The Catalina plant employs 70 people, with up to 120 people during peak times.

Seal fur is a shorthaired or naturally sheared material which dyes very easily. When it is properly processed, seal is a very soft and highly workable clothing platform suitable for all sorts of garment designs.

In 2001, the value of Canada’s entire fur industry topped $335 million, according to Industry Canada, including $122 million in fur garments and $193 million in fur pelts. Seal fur is only a small portion of the overall Canadian fur industry. However, the demand for seal fur exports from companies like Rieber of Norway and Great Greenland Furhouse of Greenland remains high because Newfoundland and Labrador seal fur is considered to be of an exceptionally high quality and value.

While the established top-market position of mink and beaver is in no peril, Atlantic Marine Products officials say furriers are finding a growing demand for sheared, colored and alternative textures like seal fur.
The extra costs to dye or shear beaver or mink to meet demands for the latest fashion trends have opened up a marketing opportunity. Seal fur can provide the ideal alternative to dyed or sheared mink or beaver and meet this niche market’s demands for the best price possible. Atlantic Marine Products Inc. says its mission is to help establish Newfoundland and Labrador in the fur-buying marketplace as the premier source of high-quality, finished seal fur.

**Methodology**

The first project included the production of promotional material, the manufacture of sample garments using dressed pelts, the establishment of marketing resources, including photographs, a high-quality catalogue, a set of fur samples showing 11 colors and a website to promote the local industry. The company also advertised on the cover of the world’s largest fur trade directory, the 556-page *Red Book*. Once the marketing materials were assembled, representatives of the company travelled to selected international fur shows or exhibitions. The marketing plans included the Hong Kong International Fur and Fashion Fair, the Outerwear Frankfurt International Fur Fair, Milfur Milano, the North American Fur and Fashion Exposition in Montreal, the Mexa International Trade Fair in Moscow and a fur auction in Copenhagen. This project also saw company representatives travel to an equipment trade fair called Tanning-Tech at Bologne, Italy, where the very latest fur-making technology was available.

The second project helped Atlantic Marine purchase two “wet drums” to wash seal pelts for final tanning and to buy a buffing machine used to refine the leather side of the finished, tanned pelt at their Catalina facility.

**Results**

The first project resulted in the identification of potential markets for seal fur in a variety of major markets.

The equipment purchased in the second project made Atlantic Marine Products’ Catalina facility the only Newfoundland-based tanner of high-quality, finished seal fur at this time.

**Conclusion**

Overall, these projects were considered a success, opening new markets for high-quality fur, assisting with the purchase of vital equipment, and developing promotional items which increase awareness.

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**Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture**
**Government of Newfoundland and Labrador**

P.O. Box 8700, St. John’s, NL, A1B 4J6
Call: 709 729-3732 / Fax: 709 729-6082
Web: [http://www.gov.nf.ca/fishaq/FDP](http://www.gov.nf.ca/fishaq/FDP)
(Or a DFA Regional Office near you)

The $10 million Fisheries Diversification Program is part of the $81.5 million Canada-Newfoundland Agreement Respecting the Economic Development Component of the Canadian Fisheries Adjustment and Restructuring Initiative.