

Aker Biomarine to combine unmanned vessel and big data to catch krill more efficiently

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Aker Biomarine, which harvests krill in Southern Ocean for uses including aquafeeds, has announced plans to deploy a unique unmanned vessel to “optimise krill fishing and contribute to reducing emissions using big data”.

The Mariner uncrewed surface vehicle (USV), was produced by Maritime Robotics, and handed over to Aker BioMarine earlier this month. This is the first time this type of USV has been used in a Norwegian fishery. It was built to withstand the extreme conditions in Antarctica, with both harsh climates and long distances to travel.

The six-metre vehicle is equipped with a range of sensor integrations and will be used both in the search for krill, and to gather data for research and population mapping. By the end of the year, the vessel will be stationed in Antarctica.

The USV will be part of the company's data-driven search for krill. Simply explained, information such as weather data and satellite images provide the crew aboard the fishing boats with indications of where there might be krill and the USV will then be sent out to check.

“This is a big day for us, as we have worked for a long time to put such a solution in place. The USV will undoubtedly give a boost to the fishing industry. And with the help of big data, it will make it easier to secure and stabilize the availability of our raw material. It will simply help make fishing “smarter”. The USV will also assist our vessels to navigate more efficiently, which will reduce our CO₂ footprint,” said Matts Johansen, CEO of Aker BioMarine,

“We chose Maritime Robotics because of their technical competence and experience, and their USV provides a reliable and flexible platform,” he continued.

“If the USV confirms that there is in fact krill at the site, we will send fishing boats out. This allows us to save time searching for krill with the fishing boat and most importantly, it helps us avoid unnecessary emissions from large fishing boats,” said Frank Grebstad, SVP vessels operations.