

# Sea Freight



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By Glenn Baker

New Zealand's sea freight industry has a long history – arguably dating back as far as 1794 when the British Royal Navy ship *Fancy* loaded 200 kauri trees for ships' spars from Doubtless Bay in Northland and the Coromandel Coast.

A major leap forward took place 88 years later, on the 15th of February, 1882 when the first shipment of frozen meat left for Great Britain from Dunedin on the sailing vessel *Dunedin* – taking 98 days to reach London.

The world's first container ship was a converted US World War 2 tanker that sailed from the port of Newark to the port of Houston in 1956, carrying a mere 58 shipping containers.

It would be some years before container ships were seen in New Zealand waters. In June 1971 the first all-container ship to visit New Zealand was the German-owned *Columbus New Zealand*. It berthed at Wellington's brand new Thorndon Container Terminal and spent eight days around the coast, calling at Auckland and Dunedin's Port Chalmers.

In the decades since the 1960s, New Zealand's economy, and indeed the global economy, has been shaped by the twin mega-trends of globalisation and containerisation.

The shipping industry has continued to evolve, striving for increased efficiency through innovation with new, larger ships specialised for each trade (especially containers) and adopting emerging technologies to boost efficiency and improve environmental outcomes.

Since that first visit by the *Columbus New Zealand* the capacity of container ships has continued to increase at a fast rate. The largest ships currently in service are almost 400 metres in length and have the capacity to carry more than 21,000 TEU (20-foot standard containers).

However, in August 2019, *MSC Gülsün*, the world's largest container ship, completed its maiden voyage from the north of China to Europe. Built in South Korea, it was the first of ten in a new class of 23,000+ TEU vessels to be added to MSC's global shipping network. This mega-ship can handle 23,756 TEU, including more than 2000 refrigerated containers.

Ocean container shipping is already regarded as one of the most environmentally friendly forms of cargo

transportation. Bigger ships generally emit less CO2 per container carried, which helps companies moving goods on these services to lower the carbon footprint of their supply chains. The *MSC Gülsün* features a new approach to energy efficiency with a bow shape designed to enhance energy efficiency by reducing hull resistance. In addition, state-of-the-art engineering minimises wind resistance, resulting in further fuel savings.

The ship's energy efficiency and fuel economy measures are helping ensure its owners are on track to meet the international 2030 environmental policy targets set by the UN International Maritime Organisation (IMO) ahead of time – building on a 13 percent improvement in CO2 emissions per ton of cargo moved already achieved since 2015.

To comply with IMO 2020 (explained next page) the *MSC Gülsün* is equipped with an IMO-approved hybrid Exhaust Gas Cleaning system, and has the option of switching to low-sulphur fuel, or to be adapted for liquefied natural gas (LNG) in the future.

Along with her ten sister ships the *Gülsün* demonstrates the next advancements in digital shipping. Technology that enables fast data transmission to shore and connection for smart containers is helping make the shipping experience more transparent, safe and reliable for customers.

In 2020 the entire sea freight industry is being impacted heavily by new technology and all shipping companies servicing New Zealand are having to make large investments to keep up with the play.

"New technological enhancements are transforming the supply chain and enabling improved business automation and transparency," says Maersk Oceania customer service director My Therese Blank.

"Simplifying industry collaboration and fostering collective efforts has the potential to reshape shipping and redefine global trade.

"A strong example is TradeLens, a digital platform based on blockchain technology that empowers businesses and authorities along the supply chain with a single, secure source of shipping data, enabling more efficient global trade.

"In 2019 the platform grew to process more than one million events per week, with support from major industry players such as Maersk."



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