

CASE STUDY

SOUTH SEA CARGO – VANUATU'S FIRST CONTAINERISED INTER-ISLAND FREIGHT SERVICE

OVERVIEW

Client type: South Sea Cargo Ltd – locally owned Vanuatu freight company
Vanuatu's first containerised inter-island cargo shipping service connecting Port Vila, Malekula & Santo

Project: South Sea Cargo – Vanuatu's First Containerised Inter-island Freight Service- Long-term tug, barge & project support for domestic logistics

Location: Port Vila (Efate) – Litzlitz (Malekula) – Luganville (Santo), Vanuatu

Timeline: 2019 – Present

CHALLENGE

Vanuatu's outer islands depend on sea transport for almost everything, but traditional services were:

- Irregular and unreliable, with ad-hoc sailings and cancellations.
- Focused on breakbulk, not modern containerised freight.
- A bottleneck for agricultural exports and essential supplies into outer islands.

South Sea Cargo was created to pioneer a reliable, scheduled, containerised domestic freight service. To make that work, they needed a marine partner that could:

- Provide dedicated tug and barge capacity on a repeat timetable.
- Safely access multiple ports and shallow wharves (Port Vila, Litzlitz, Luganville and other small landings).
- Move containers, ISO tanks, LCL cargo and machinery at a cost structure that supports island economies.

In short: build Vanuatu's first true container inter-island service, not another "when we can" coastal run.

SOLUTION

Ocean Logistics provides the marine backbone for South Sea Cargo's operation:

Core scheduled service

- Long-term charter of:
 - 1,800 DWT dumb barge Carcinos (Ocean Logistics)
 - Dedicated tug (Ocean Logistics) towing Carcinos on a fixed loop
- Route: Port Vila → Litzlitz (Malekula) → Luganville (Santo) → Litzlitz → Port Vila.
- Frequency: approximately twice-monthly sailings (every other week).
- Each voyage:
 - Up to 33 containers (20', 40' and ISO tanks, plus LCL in boxes).
 - Around 1000+ tonnes of cargo per round trip.
 - ~160 nm per leg, ~320 nm per full voyage, ~5-day turnaround.

Cargo profile enabled

- Southbound: rice, cement, building materials, fuel in ISO tanks, general supplies.
- Northbound / return: timber, copra, live cattle and other agricultural products, connecting producers to export gateways.

Additional project & access support

- Tug & barge and landing craft support for communities and sites inaccessible to conventional cargo ships on Efate and Santo (small wharves, beach landings, remote project sites).
- Project charters, e.g. loading heavy tanks and equipment for an asphalt batching plant for Luganville Airport (using Ocean 2 crane + Carcinos), enabling South Sea Cargo charters that support national infrastructure.

RESULTS

Over six years of continuous operation:

- Approximately 170+ individual voyages completed since 2019.
- Estimated 170,000+ tonnes of cargo moved between Efate, Malekula and Santo.
- Roughly 54,400+ nautical miles towed on this service alone.
- Typically ~25 voyages per year, with only occasional pauses due to cyclones, severe weather, or scheduled maintenance.

Impact for Vanuatu and buyers:

- Created and sustained Vanuatu's first containerised inter-island freight corridor, giving businesses and households a reliable timetable instead of guessing when the next ship comes.
- Supports the National Economic Recovery focus on agriculture by making it cheaper and more predictable to move crops and livestock from producers to markets.
- Improves safety and environmental performance by moving diesel and bulk products in containers and ISO tanks rather than ad-hoc methods.
- Provides Ocean Logistics with a proven, long-term recurring service, demonstrating the ability to run high-frequency, national-scale logistics, not just one-off project tows.

170+ VOYAGES. 6 YEARS OF CONTINUOUS SERVICE. WE DON'T JUST PROMISE A SCHEDULE; WE STICK TO IT. PARTNER WITH OCEAN LOGISTICS FOR MARINE TRANSPORT YOU CAN SET YOUR WATCH BY.

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