



For immediate release

## **Optimarin follows strong 2020 with fight for Norway's Smartest Business title**

Ballast Water Treatment (BWT) specialist Optimarin is fighting for the title of Norway's Smartest Business, capping a year that has seen strong sales and revenue performances under difficult conditions. The Stavanger-headquartered, global BWT pioneer finished 2020 with a surge in contracts – including signing a 40-vessel exclusive frame agreement with a major, unnamed shipowner – and started 2021 with news of its inclusion on a shortlist of three for the prestigious national accolade. CEO Leiv Kallestad describes the past 12 months as “a truly defining time” for the team.

Optimarin has an established position at the head of the BWT niche. The first manufacturer to release a commercial system to the maritime market (back in 2000), the firm was also the first to achieve full USCG approval, in 2016, the first to launch a five-year parts and servicing guarantee, and the first to offer a leasing agreement to global shipowners. However, Kallestad admits that there was no guarantee – even after years of consecutive growth – that 2020 would end so positively.

### **Rapid recovery**

“We got off to an excellent start, but nobody predicted the advent of COVID-19, or its impact on the shipping industry,” he says. “From a constant flow of orders, we suddenly went to a position where, in June and July, they dried up. Ballast water compliance is essential to the future of shipowners’ businesses, but when they’re fighting to navigate an immediate crisis it understandably slips off the radar. It was an unusual, and unwelcome, experience for us.

“That said, it was a temporary issue. Throughout August and September the momentum in the market returned, and by the end of the year orders were as strong, perhaps stronger, than ever before. Owners know they have to comply before 2024 at the very latest, so the forward-thinking ones quickly re-energised efforts to find high-quality, market proven systems - with the best service and support networks – ahead of the rush. That’s simply the best way to ensure full compliance, fleet flexibility and BWT satisfaction.”

### **Evolving opportunity**

Despite the summer “blip” Optimarin actually increased sales and revenues by approximately 5% across 2020. A surge in fleet agreements, particularly from European and American owners, fuelled the overall growth. Kallestad now predicts 2021 will be another strong year, with continuing progress in the retrofit segment, where Optimarin’s simple, modular system is a preferred, easy to install solution. An order “peak” should follow in 2022 and 2023 - in the run-up to compliance - heralding a new stage of business development as servicing and after sales moves to the fore.

It's a long-term strategy that impressed Norsk Industri – a nationwide business association representing almost 3000 Norwegian companies – and Siemens, the organisers of Norway's Smartest Business, an annual initiative now in its seventh year.

### **Added value efforts**

"It's fantastic to be down to the final three, across the whole of the Norwegian business spectrum, competing for this respected prize," comments Kallestad. "It's a title that emphasizes strength in innovation, digitisation, sustainability, and the ability to compete with the very best businesses in the world. All of these criteria have been focus areas over the past two and a half decades, as we've worked to build a global operation that safeguards the environment, while delivering outstanding technology, service and peace of mind for our customers. Serving this industry and adding value for our stakeholders is our greatest achievement, but it's obviously very nice to be recognised in this way!"

Optimarin faces Norwegian recycling business Norsk Gjenvinning and machining experts Aarbakke in the final shortlist. The winner will be announced on 10 February.

### **Building success**

Optimarin has now sold over 1000 of its market proven UV-based BWT systems, with more than 700 installed and operational. The business, founded in 1994, recently became the first to attain USCG certification for a choice of two filters (Filtrex and Boll). It also received revised IMO G8 certification in the second half of 2020.

Kallestad concludes that Optimarin will "not be resting on its laurels going forward."

He notes: "During 2021 we will continue to implement improvements and functionality to the system with the objective of reducing complexity and footprint. In addition, we'll maintain focus on creating additional value for our customers through the on-going strengthening of our global service operations."

Optimarin customers include names such as Royal Caribbean International, Fednav, GulfMark, Matson Navigation, McDermott, the Danish Navy, MOL, Seatruck, and Technip, amongst others.

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