

Consumers' perception towards traceability of fishery products and its relationship with quality: across-national comparison

Domingo Calvo Dopico¹, Rogério Mendes², Helena Silva², Stefano Mariani³, Andrew Griffiths³, Belgees Boufana³, Véronique Verrez-Bagnis⁴, Marc Jérôme⁴, Ute Schröder⁵, Kristina Kappel⁵, Julie Maguire⁶, Marc Shorten⁶, Amaya Velasco⁷, Ricardo Pérez-Martín⁷, Carmen G. Sotelo⁷

¹ University of A Coruña, A Coruña, Spain

² Instituto Nacional de Recursos Biológicos, Portugal

³ University of Salford, UK

⁴ Ifremer, France

⁵ Max Rubner-Institut, Germany

⁶ Indigo Rock Marine Research Station, Ireland

⁷ Instituto de Investigaciones Marinas CSIC, Spain

Companies from the fishing sector are facing an ever-more globalised and competitive environment, with growing demand from consumers for better quality. Meanwhile, the phenomenon of globalization has highlighted the need for knowledge and monitoring of products offered to the consumer. One of the tools that help firms to track the path of a food product throughout the fishing chain is traceability. However, most of consumers do not recognise what the term 'traceability' means. Similarly, there are very few studies that have investigated within the fishery sector, from consumer behaviour point of view, the relationship between quality and traceability.

Based on this preliminary research, and aware of the fishing industry's required response to these challenges, we want to research how consumers perceive the traceability. Particularly, we want to reach three main objectives. Firstly, understand consumers' perception of the term 'traceability' and its relationship with quality. Secondly, know the best indicators to enable the consumer to recognise the traceability of fish products. Third, assess the consumers' expectations towards the introduction of a traceability system and willingness to pay a price premium.

To find the answers to those objectives an e-questionnaire – see at http://www.economicas.udc.es/labelfish_2014 – is being carried out in Spain, Portugal, France, United Kingdom, Ireland and Germany. Fieldwork began on January 7 and will run until February 7. Currently we have already collected more than 1500 observations.

This study may provide a very interesting contribution. If we properly comprehend what the consumer understands by traceability and how it relates to quality, we can improve not only the quality assurance for the end consumer but also to help those in charge of the value chain (e.g. fishermen, processors, distributors) to identify and differentiate better fish (or seafood) products.