

Fresh or thawed? Cod availability in France and UK

In the QualiFish-project one of the work packages is focusing on market strategies and economic perspectives in the whitefish industry. Earlier this year the researchers conducted field trips to the United Kingdom (UK) and France to examine these markets in respect to available cod products. Based on these trips they have gathered valuable information which will be used to develop a whitefish questionnaire which will be rolled out in the project.

France and UK are two important European seafood markets. UK is the largest market for frozen products while France is the largest in term of fresh consumption. Understanding the availability of products, and purchasing behaviour is important in understanding these markets. Thus, researchers conducted field trips to UK and France to gather information on available whitefish products that they can utilize in the development of a questionnaire. In addition to meetings with industry experts, the trip included examining retail environment in these markets to see what cod products were on offer for these markets' consumers.

UK and France are culturally quite distinct when it comes to the purchase of seafood. Looking at the UK market, it is dominated by chilled products that have previously been frozen; a fact the average UK consumer is most likely unaware. In contrast the French market has few thawed products and mostly consists of fresh products. But, some French supermarkets are starting to utilize MAP -

(Modified Atmosphere Packaging), a technology which currently is much more common in UK supermarkets, for their seafood products.

The field trips also found differences between the purchasing habits of the UK and French consumers. The representative for Marketing Seafood in Paris explained that French consumers also utilize traditional fish mongers to a much greater extent than UK consumers, and in France traditional fish mongers represent 30% of retail sales for seafood. The fish mongers in France also serve the purpose of recommending products, purchase amount, preparation and recipe advice, in addition to providing information on origin and quality that may be less accessible on supermarket packaging.

Based on the information and experience gathered during these trips there have been devised a proposition for a whitefish survey which will be developed and launched by the end of the year.



Figure 1: Whitefish from Tesco showing the origin and capture method of the catch on the packaging. Photo: Jonas Torrisen.



Figure 2: Fish selection from a fishmonger in Paris. Photo: Jonas Torrisen.

Research partners



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