

CONFERENCE REPORT

Final Conference

September 17th 2014

Hull, United Kingdom



NorthSeaFish

Innovation from catch to plate



The Final Conference of the INTERREG IV B project North Sea Fish took place on 17th of September 2014. This event focussed at the prospects for North Sea fisheries including enhanced labelling, tourism initiatives, port developments and supply chain innovations.

The University of Hull, one of the UK project partners, hosted this special one-day conference to showcase the different approaches. Key note speakers and researchers were joined by 80 delegates from seven different countries to share 'stories' from fishing communities around the North Sea.



Mariette de Visser

As first speaker Mariette de Visser, Alderman of Municipality of De Marne, reviews the two years of North Sea Fish and explains why North Sea Fish has been important in her own region. The Marne has worked hard to take steps towards a more sustainable perspective for the fishery in the North of the Netherlands. The cooperation with the North Sea Fish partners turned out to be very helpful in this respect.



At the start of North Sea Fish, De Marne established a contact point for the fishery sector and its local community. This "supporter of the fishery" is Mr Douwe Hollenga, and he took some important steps to increase the communication and mutual understanding between the different parties in the harbour of Lauwersoog, especially between the fishery and governmental organisations. He also organised a round table to discuss an innovation agenda for the port and the fishery sector for the coming years. One of the outcomes is the current investigation of the possibilities to develop a bio refinery based on waste of shrimps.

The NSF project

Since 2012, six project partners from four different countries have been working together to find new ways to increase innovation in fisheries, fishery ports and fish-based regional



economies around the North Sea. North Sea Fish: Innovation from Catch to Plate has an ambitious agenda. Partly financed by European Union's INTERREG IVB North Sea Region Programme, the aim is to promote solutions - from branding to sustainability and supply chains - to create a viable fishing industry that is able to meet the challenges and opportunities facing the North Sea fisheries in the 21st century.

For fish-based regional economies, selling more fish brings in more money. But the flip side of that might be overfishing and diminished fish stocks. Consumers claim that they are willing to pay more for sustainably caught, high quality fish. By focusing on sustainability and quality, there is an excellent chance to add value to the supply chain.

Throughout the project, various approaches have been tested across the six regions to find new ways of adding value to sustainable fish products - creating innovation from catch to plate. It has always been the project's intention to cause a trigger effect, taking small steps towards innovation, specialising and broadening the fisheries industry to maintain a sustainable economy.



Representative audience



The conference provided a platform for discussion about sustainability from many different angles - cultural and historical as well as the purely commercial. It gave us the opportunity to address some important and often difficult questions: What do consumers want? Should we only be persuading them to eat more fish? Or should we be educating them to eat less fish but of a higher quality at a fairer price? And what does sustainability mean anyway? Attempting to answer these questions brought a high level

of discussion from a truly representative audience. All the stakeholders within the fisheries supply chain were there - fishermen, processors, consumers and everything in between - and the speakers had to be at their very best to address the issues raised. These same delegates will now be able take away what they have heard and apply them in their own fishing communities. That is a legacy that the North Sea Fish project and its partners can truly be proud of.

Key-note speakers

North Sea Fish: Innovation from Catch to Plate invited five key-note speakers, all internationally renowned in their fields, to examine some of the issues in creating a more sustainable North Sea fishery. Subjects covered in their presentations ranged from educating consumers to buy higher quality fish to an examination of how fishing ports, small and large, are re-branding and reinventing themselves.



Jonathan Banks

Jonathan Banks Associates Ltd, UK

‘One extra portion: can we help consumers to eat more fish?’

How can we help the supermarket shopper choose added value fish products more often? This was the question consumer trends expert Jonathan Banks posed in a wide-ranging presentation on the factors influencing the food choices we make.



Beginning with an analysis of current social and economic trends, he concluded that, despite the recent economic upturn in the UK, money worries still predominate. Unlike other sources of protein, such as red meat and poultry, our consumption of fish remains fairly flat, with a preference for tried and tested species, such as salmon, cod and haddock. But if we can't increase participation in the market, is it possible to persuade those who do eat fish to eat it more often? With people spending, on average, over 31 non-working hours a week using the internet, online sales would seem an obvious place to go. However, it is important not to stoke press misinformation on fishing or contribute further to the confusion of consumers in the face of so many different accreditation schemes.

Jonathan emphasised the four mega-trends – convenience, health, pleasure and ethics – that influence food customers and considered how the innovations used to add value to products in other sectors might be applied to fish. While new brands, such as the ‘Saucy Fish’ concept, were susceptible to being copied, they could still significantly increase customer spend on fish. He concluded: “We can definitely succeed. Fish is a great product. We just need to get people to try it and they will make repeat purchases.”

Olga van der Valk

‘Sustainable fisheries governance: it’s all about cooperation’

Researcher on sustainable market chains and networks, LEI Wageningen UR, Netherlands.



The Dutch fishing industry has changed from a closed local community to a more diverse national and international network. But although fishing communities have started to work together with other fishermen, retailers, NGOs, scientists, and the government to create more sustainable fisheries, they remain reluctant collaborators.

Anthropologist, Olga van der Valk, discussed the non-economic factors in fishing communities that prevent or promoted closer cooperation with other elements in the supply chain. “I’m interested in what makes people act in a certain way,” she said “What’s going on below the surface? Vertical chain collaboration isn’t happening and I wanted to find out why not.” Although fisheries only make a 0.2% contribution to Dutch GDP, they have a long history and remain very important to local economies, in terms of community and employment.

Olga’s qualitative research involved interviewing people in fishing communities to see how they related to each other. It became apparent that one factor – trust – was of prime importance. “By investing socially, the whole supply chain gets stronger and has its own identity,” she said. “But [for the fishing communities] trust is an important factor. People say: I don’t trust just anyone with my wallet. If there is no trust, there is no confidence to do new things.”

Cohesive networks, such as those found in tight-knit fishing communities, build trust. However, if they are too close, information is just recycled and nothing changes for the better. Weak links, she concluded, are needed to connect local networks with the outside world. Along with trust, a strong work ethos and resilience to outside pressure shape a fisherman’s world. “People feel that enterprises should be part of the family,” said Olga. “Sons follow their fathers. It’s not just a way of making money.” The formation of collaborative networks is challenged

further by the feeling of social inequality that exists between fishermen, the processing industry and distributors. Olga suggested a number of measures that would help remove traditional blocks to vertical chain collaboration, especially greater education, emancipation of women, confidence in networking, community involvement, diversification of the local economy and greater connection with other networks. The old habits of autonomy and resilience run deep, she said, although there are signs that the younger generation may be more amenable to new ways of working.

Gerard van Keken

'Re'FISH'ited: Place branding and place making for fishing communities'

Independent researcher, Netherlands

Can fishing communities use their considerable physical and cultural assets to create viable place brands? Gerard van Keken drew on the experience of Breskens and Arnemuiden – two small fishing communities in The Netherlands, to illustrate how branding can help create a sustainable future based on tourism. Branding, he said, promotes distinctiveness and identity, generating a good reputation that is attractive to businesses and visitors. The challenge, in places with a strong fishing heritage, was to generate a positive 'fishy feeling' that people could buy into.



In creating a place brand, reflecting a community's values, rituals, heroes and symbols are paramount. In Breskens, for example, a town that is well known for its shrimp fishery and already boasts a popular annual fishing festival, the branding process looked at ways of reflecting a strong sense of community, bound together by its work ethic. The existing village square was remodelled to reflect its fishing heritage, using large fish sculptures as public artwork. The town's small museum was transformed into a 'fishing experience', and new restaurants specialising in locally caught seafood were encouraged.

In Arnemuiden, a similar process took place, with the town's heritage, reflected in the traditional Dutch costumes still worn by local women, taking centre stage. A traditional shipyard was restored and a new waterfront developed. Signage, historical photos and street art were all added and even traditional fishermen's jumpers, restyled as modern fashion accessories, played their part in the town's reinvention.

He concluded: "With a mix of the right hardware, software and orgware, place branding can pay dividends for fishing communities. But residents are always the starting point."

Stephanie Maes

'A l'Ostendaise initiative'

The large Belgian seaside resort of Ostende has a population of 70,000 but only 10 per cent of the fish caught there is bought locally. But with 17m day tourists to the coast in the summer and a significant minority (20-30%) coming largely for reasons related to fishing, a large potential source of additional income was being missed.



Stephanie Maes described how the 'A l'Ostendaise' initiative was trying to remedy the situation by bringing fishermen and chefs together to boost the market for locally caught sea food. The campaign was launched earlier this year with a teaser promotional video, featuring fishermen challenging the chefs by to cook something interesting with their catch. Local restaurants also agreed to take part, offering two new species every month cooked 'a l'Ostendaise' and hosting popular sessions featuring chefs and fishermen talking about their work. On the back of interest generated by the chefs appearing on a TV cookery channel, a maritime tour and fishing trail have also been launched.

Stephanie concluded that, with the right support and encouragement from the beginning, local people have taken ownership of a project that is bringing benefits for the whole community. Sustainability is also being boosted by focusing consumption on lesser known fish species.

Mike Mitchell

Technical and Corporate Social Responsibility
Director for Young's Seafood Ltd, UK

“Think of the Humber, think about fishing.” So began Mike Mitchell’s whistle-stop tour of the history of a region that has always been synonymous with the fisheries industry. From the mid-19th century to the final cod wars of the 1970s, fishing from Hull and Grimsby grew to a position of national dominance, with annual catches peaking at around 500,000 tonnes in the 1940s. Since then the story has largely been one of decline. But from the wreckage of the Humber fishing fleets, another industry has emerged to fill the gap – at least partially. Fish processing on the Humber grew in parallel with the fishing industry. And since the demise of the deep-sea trawlers, it has continued to go from strength to strength. Over 3,000 people now work in the industry here, processing 70% per cent of the UK’s seafood. And although it is a task that could theoretically be done anywhere, the Humber’s historical associations with the sea put it at an advantage.

Mike concluded: “We have the best port infrastructure in the UK, a skilled labour force and a strong corporate culture of sustainable exploitation. We’re leaders in investment and technological development and are ideally located for national and international logistics networks. Nowhere else in the country has what we have to offer.”

The North Sea Fish project has challenged researchers in its partner regions to investigate new approaches to sustainability across many different disciplines. In a packed afternoon agenda, delegates were given an insight into some of the diverse elements of the project.

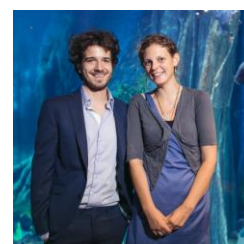
‘Seafood processing on the Humber bank’



Kim Sys and Arne Kinds

‘How sustainable is the fish on your plate?’

Kim Sys and Arne Kinds of the Belgian Fisheries and Agriculture Authority ILVO, introduced Valduvis, a new tool for assessing and visualizing sustainability in fishery catches. Valduvis is more comprehensive than existing fisheries ‘kite marks’ such as the MSC (Marine Stewardship Council) mark. Drawing data from ship’s E-catch log (relating to the type of vessel, equipment and species), it simultaneously measures the three ‘pillars’ of sustainability, scoring each individual fishing trip in real time for social, economic and ecological impact.



Valduvis has three purposes: monitoring catches, providing a learning tool for fishermen and offering information for third parties. With an initial focus on providing sustainability data for fish buyers at auctions, the tool’s creators hope that it will eventually be the sustainability measure of choice for the whole of the North Sea fisheries. Another long-term ambition is to adapt the accreditation system to make it suitable for retailers.

Frits Grijpstra

'Port development in Hanstholm, Harlingen and Lauwersoog'

Using the examples Hanstholm in Denmark and Harlingen and Lauwersoog in the Netherlands, Frits Grijpstra from Harlingen discussed the way in which fishing ports could be remodeled to better serve their changing uses. The role of Harlingen, he said, has changed with greater competition, lower employment and higher turnover. Lauwersoog has adapted to the changing conditions by developing a new marina that is attracting more tourists

In Harlingen, a change in ownership of the fish auction initially created some ownership issues. But improved services to fishing vessels, including a new jetty design to facilitate repairs and provide better links to road freight, is making the port more attractive to fishermen. He said that further study was needed to identify the short and long-term needs of all three ports to ensure they had a sustainable future in the fisheries industry.

Nick Riley

'Technology in the Fish Supply chain': five case studies

Dr Nick Riley of Hull University's School of Engineering has been working with fisheries businesses across the study area to research the impact of radio communications technology on supply chain connectivity. He said: "Efficient logistics has three aspects: identification of the product, locating it and then communicating its movement. You have to have all those aspects working in harmony to reap business benefits." Nick's research has assessed the current state of identification, location and communications (ILC) technology, best practice, opportunities for improvement and lessons learned in five cases with diverse supply chains.



Many of the principles of Radio-frequency identification (RFID) – the wireless use of electromagnetic fields to transfer data – are already familiar to us through the use of barcodes or QR codes; their application in the age of the 'internet of things', in which every physical item also has a data presence, is becoming more and more commonplace. However, Nick found that implementing RFID technology in a fish auction requires careful engineering. The salt and water on a fish box, for example, can easily render identification tags unreadable unless the tags are correctly positioned.

Other questions must also be addressed, such as how to get the data to the supermarket and how to tell consumers what they need to know about the fish they're buying. As more and more fish is bought online and the internet of things continues to gather momentum, a premium will be placed on the ability to integrate this supply chain information through data clouds.

Tiny Maenhout

'Resilient communities: From the sustainability star to the Michelin star'

Chefs have a crucial part to play in persuading consumers to spend more on local or traceable fish products, according to Tiny Maenhout from the Municipality of Sluis. "They can really make a difference in helping to celebrate the 'genius loci' of a place, giving small producers an advantage," she said. She cited the example of UK TV Chef Rick Stein, an ambassador for sea food for 40 years, who has put the small Devon fishing town of Padstow on the map as a destination for discerning 'foodies'.



Similar successes can be found elsewhere. The Zwin region of the Netherlands alone can boast more than 25 Michelin stars in its world-class seafood restaurants while cooperation between fishermen and chefs are making food festivals more and more popular. A successful collaboration between chefs and fishermen, said Tiny, can create an authentic atmosphere that benefits the whole town.

Other innovations are also possible. Traditional fisherman's jumpers can be given a new lease of life as fashion statements and new pharmaceutical products, focusing on the healthy properties of fish can provide additional markets for producers. In an age when the origin of the products is increasingly important to the consumer, she said, fishermen need to be aware of all the branding opportunities.

"We need to think about how we can personalise the product," she said. "Use images of fishermen on the packaging. It's all about people and passion. "In small fishing communities, 25 per cent of people still work in fishing. If that goes, the whole community goes. So it's vital that we do everything we can to sustain it."

Vox pops

Mike Mitchell, Technical and Corporate Social Responsibility Director for Young's Seafood Ltd



"I really enjoyed the event. All the presentations were really energising, very positive. In our industry, we certainly have a lot of challenges, both in the catching and marketing of sea food. It's a very competitive world with highly complex supply chains and they're not without issues. But this conference has been really focussed on things that can be done to make a positive difference – real change – and those are the lessons that we should take away and implement."

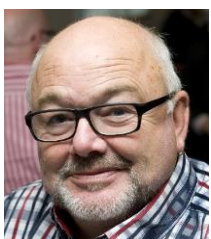


Heleen Lenoir, ILVO, Belgium, one of the project partners

"I came here to learn about other parties' views of sustainability and also how to make little improvements with fisheries and for the wider public. At ILVO I'm involved in fishery improvement techniques and sustainability scoring for retail and the last key-note speech [by Mike Mitchell] was very interesting for me because he talked about how he wants to promote sustainability in fisheries. I have spoken to him since and he explained to me that he has his own marine biologist to give scores and give advice about sustainability."



Günter Klever, manager of two Producer Organisations in the German shrimp fisheries.



"The reason I'm here is sustainability. It's a big issue. For the last four years we have been involved in the MSC certification and have had a lot of problems with that, so we are looking for some alternatives. I'm very interested to hear about Valduvis as an alternative to MSC. I got some very interesting information about the Ostende initiative. It was interesting for me because I'm from a small fishing community as well, so probably we can adopt some of the same approaches."



Simon Dwyer, Sea Fox Management Consultants.

"My role has been supporting Hull University with their part of the project throughout the two-and-a-half year journey from start to finish. I've been connecting Dr Nick Riley with various sea food sector organisations across the Humber to see how innovation can improve the supply chain from catch to plate. The advantage of an event like this is the knowledge base. It's so valuable to get different people's perspectives on all the various touch points and we've seen some very interesting presentations. It's just great to gather people together to talk about the fisheries industry in such a positive way."



Michael Henriques, consultant, Port of Hanstholm/Tetra, one of the project partners



“I am here with my colleagues from Hanstholm in Denmark. We represent a big port and although we are very much into sustainable fisheries we are handling large volumes of fish. Our interest is in how to develop that in new ways to get more fish into the system. The conference has certainly given us food for thought, especially on how to develop the fisheries sector, to attract new fishermen and improve vertical integration. That’s very important. You have to integrate the fishermen with the factories and wholesalers and so on in order to convince more people to eat fish.”

Mike Cohen, chief executive of the Holderness Fishing Group,
a trade association representing fishermen and fish merchants in East Yorkshire.



“I’ve been interested to hear the different perspectives of the different countries represented, especially what people have to say about the supply chain because the great majority of our catch is exported and supply chain issues are central to the prosperity of the East Yorkshire fishery. I was very interested in the talk [by Olga van der Valk] about collective organisations because that’s what we have here in East Yorkshire. The Holderness Fishing Industry Group is a recently formed group so I’m always interested to hear what other organisations like us have achieved elsewhere and to learn from their experience.”

Roos Galjaard, project manager for the Interreg IVB North Sea Region.



“This has been one of the best conferences I’ve been involved in. The speakers have looked at the complex issues facing the North Sea fishing industry from many different angles and given us all considerable food for thought. I’m particularly happy that we managed to attract delegates from such a diversity of backgrounds. A project like this can be very inward looking, so it was very pleasing to see so many stakeholders from the supply chain engaging with it: fishermen, processors, consumers and everything in between. The more mixed your audience is, the more likely you are to spread the word and share the lessons of the research.”

Lee Wilson, Technology Advisor at the University of Hull Business School



“The Technology Innovation Hub is a showcase of logistics and supply chain technologies. The hub is unique in Europe, bringing together world-leading training simulators for 'real life' jobs in construction and logistics, offering scenario training for mobile crane drivers, tower crane operators, and port crane operators. These laboratory facilities are useful for the North Sea Fish project.”



North Sea Fish: innovation from catch to plate is an INTERREG IVB North Sea Region project funded by the EU.

