

Opening speech

by Danish Minister for Food, Fisheries and Agriculture,

Hans Christian Schmidt

Ladies and Gentlemen, Welcome to Denmark. And welcome to the SEAFOODplus Conference.

I am very pleased to be able to come and talk to so many competent researchers, industry representatives, as well as representatives from the private and public sector.

We are here to learn about the first wave of results from the many research projects going on in SEAFOODplus. Projects that cover a wide range of different subjects within seafood research.

Seafood is often associated with something fresh, healthy, delicate and tasty – Yes, and some seafood products are even considered trendy. Seafood is a delicate food. Delicate in the sense of taste, appearance, freshness and smell...But also delicate in the way it is handled.

Fish that is handled properly...

- when caught by the fisherman,
- when landed in the harbour and sold,
- when prepared or processed and packaged by the industry,
- and when received and sold by the retailer, is a safe, healthy and high quality food product!

But we need to secure every link in the chain from sea to table so as to succeed. It is a very ambitious goal! But a goal we need to achieve considering the growing demand for food quality.

And the consumer will be the judge when he or she decides what's for dinner! But this is exactly the kind of goal that the SEAFOODplus project intends to pursue. You involve the entire chain, focusing on the consumer's need and wish for safe, healthy and high quality seafood products.

To reach such an ambitious goal you have combined the knowledge and resources across traditionally divided academic fields, and you have created a framework of international cooperation that is on a scale not yet seen in the seafood sector.

SEAFOODplus sets a new standard for international cooperation in seafood research. And what is just as important: you focus on the consumer's needs!

The world is changing. Globalisation has turned fish and seafood into an international commodity. New markets are emerging. And new demands are close behind. The way the consumer perceives seafood and how it is fished is evolving.

Globally, we are facing issues and problems that are not limited to national borders. Nor can they be kept inside the scope of a single science.

Let me start with the very beginning of the chain: where the fish is caught.

Growing populations in Asia, South America and Africa put pressure on the need for more food production. At the same time, economic development is expected to lead to an increasing

demand for seafood products.

But, fish stocks worldwide cannot keep pace with demand. In fact, the major fish stocks in the world are depleting.

In short: We need more fish. We need better seafood products. And we need that because of the limited fisheries resources.

So we need to exploit fisheries resources in a sustainable way, so as to secure healthy fish stocks for future generations.

With this in mind, I find it very useful that SEAFOODplus is trying to find a better way of using the so-called by-products. This may lead to increased use of fisheries resources without increasing the pressure on the fish stocks.

SEAFOODplus is also looking into how to improve aquaculture production, whilst focusing on ethically acceptable, healthy and high quality seafood, produced with minimum impact on the environment. Aquaculture presents itself as a promising supply of seafood that could – at least partly – make up for the decrease in the wild fish stocks.

In the 1960ies agriculture went through the so-called “Green Revolution” that boosted crop yields to the benefit of both consumers and business.

Can aquaculture go through a “Blue Revolution” and boost the production of farmed fish so as to meet consumer demand, and, at the same time, minimize side-effects on the environment?

I hope SEAFOODplus will pursue this challenge!

Moving along the chain, handling the seafood is an essential issue. From the landing of the fish to the processing by the industry and the marketing by the retailers we need new thinking.

So I welcome the focus on food security and the development of tailor-made seafood products that can ensure better safety and quality of sea-food products. This is essential, given the important and increasing world trade in seafood.

It is important not to put obstacles in the way of world trade in seafood. In fact, we should open up even more for imports of seafood products into the European Union. This can only benefit both the consumer and the overall economy!

At the same time, reliable and effective traceability systems which document the process from live fish to ready-to-eat product, become an essential tool. This in order to guarantee that seafood products meet certain safety and quality standards - regardless of the origin of the seafood product.

I will be looking forward to hearing the results in this area from SEAFOODplus.

We all know that fish is good for us. And many of us could probably eat more of it than we do.

SEAFOODplus is looking into how seafood can reduce health problems, and how consumption of seafood products can be increased.

I find this approach very important given the increasing problems from nutrition related diseases. Seafood as part of a healthy diet must not only be an important element for targeted

groups such as pregnant women or senior citizens.

An increasing number of children and young people all over Europe are suffering from varying degrees of obesity. Of course, eating more seafood cannot on its own solve the increasing nutritional problems and related diseases occurring among Europeans.

But your approach to solving the problem is indispensable, and deserves to be mentioned: SEAFOODplus is looking at consumer behaviour. Only then can we develop seafood products that meet the consumer's needs. Thus making it possible to adapt products to the consumer. Not the other way round.

More fish on the table means good health and good business. We need to find ways to make this happen. And I strongly believe that SEAFOODplus is an important answer to this dual challenge.

Seafood is a delicate food. I love fish. If it is presented as a safe and high quality product, the consumer will agree with that statement. And will benefit fully from seafood's nutritional characteristics. That is why it is vital to focus on the consumer!

We are living in the age of globalisation. Seafood is no exception to that. On the contrary, seafood is traded worldwide.

We must encourage the process of globalisation. And we must facilitate trade in seafood – together with all other foods – by further liberalizing and deregulating world markets.

The products chosen will be those that meet consumer demands with respect to safety, healthiness and quality. And to meet this end, it is essential to demand safe handling of the sea-food in every link of the chain from sea to table.

SEAFOODplus can bring us all a long way to meet this goal:

- You incorporate the entire chain from sea to table.
- You go across a variety of academic fields from social sciences to natural sciences.
- You bring together researchers and industry representatives from 16 European countries and Canada.

SEAFOODplus is a response to globalisation itself. SEAFOODplus is also a unique opportunity for strengthening the ties between industry and research within the Seafood sector.

So I strongly encourage industry representatives to think about how they can be part of the project and use the results coming out of SEAFOODplus.

Today, we can learn about the first wave of results from SEAFOODplus.

More results are expected to emerge in the coming years. I hope you will enjoy your stay in our small country surrounded by the sea.

Thank you for listening.