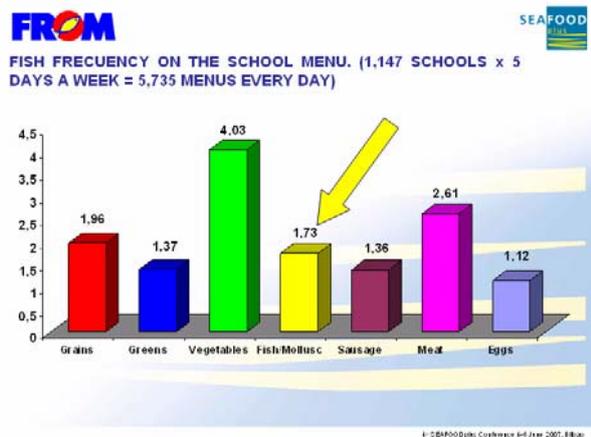


Seafood consumption at school: an overview

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IN CONCLUSION

- Insufficient fish consumption in the school dining halls.
- Fish served in the school menus possess scarce valuation, sometimes causing refusal in the students.
- Flavour and generally the organoleptic conditions of the fish served are NOT the most favourable for children approval.

Seafood consumption habits of the Spanish population have been FROM's aim of study for years. In spite of the efforts made, the knowledge of the consumption of seafood products in the child population, and especially out-of-home consumption was a need that had to be met. On the other hand, 20 % of the Spanish children have lunch at the school five days a week, increasing a 5 % every year, hence the importance of knowing the situation of fish consumption in the school dining halls.

The study was carried out during 2005-2006, mainly among children of 5th and 6th year of Primary education. The interviews were carried out with different groups looking for a balance between the coastal and the inland zones. In all, 112 actions of research were developed among discussion groups and in-depth interviews. On the other hand, a quantitative study was made, analyzing the menus of the schools according to the weekly planning, standing out among first, main course and dessert, in order to quantify the times fish was served per week in the schools dining hall, the preparation and the appearance as well. Also, the study looks into the real conditions of fish intake in the school dining halls, with the presence of an observer the weekday fish was served, in the 1,147 schools sampled.

In the school dining halls, fish is served at an average of 1.73 times a week, that is, less than twice per week. Fish served in the schools is mainly frozen. Only the 9 % of the fish served is fresh, and it is relatively more frequent in the self-managed kitchens. Among the 5,735 daily menus studied, fish is served in 1,946 menus. 68.7 % is served as principal element in the main course, 26 % is present as garnishing in the first plate, 3.5% as garnishing in the main course, and the 1.8% as fried fish in the main course.

Three basic conclusions can be highlighted:

- (1) an inadequate seafood consumption in the school dining halls,
- (2) the fish served in the menus of the school dining halls possess scarce valuation, sometimes causing refusal of the students and
- (3) flavour and generally the organoleptic conditions of the fish served are not the most favourable for approval by children.