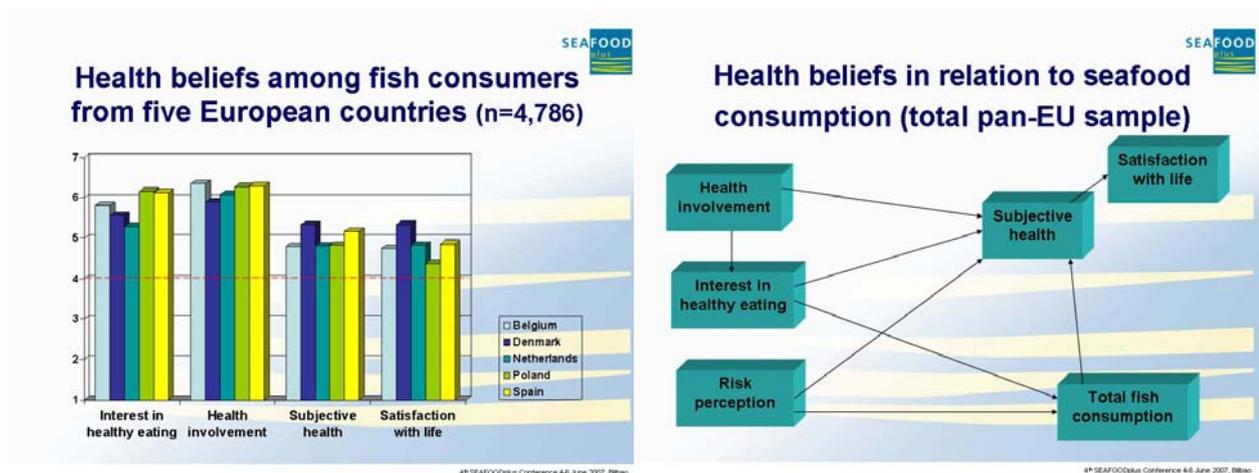


Health beliefs as drivers to seafood consumption

Presenting author: Zuzanna Pieniak ⁽¹⁾ co-authors: Wim Verbeke ⁽¹⁾, Joachim Scholderer ⁽²⁾ and Karen Brunsø ⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾Department of Agricultural Economics, Ghent University, Belgium

⁽²⁾MAPP, Aarhus School of Business, University of Aarhus, Denmark



The main objective of SEA-INFOCOM is to assess consumer's needs for seafood information and to develop effective seafood communication related to traceability, health, safety and ethical issues. The project is led by Ghent University in Belgium, and has partners in Denmark (MAPP) and Norway (NIFA).

Physical properties, such as bones, smell, and taste, price, availability, influence of referent people and personal factors like age, gender, and region are only a few of the factors that influence seafood consumption. Fish, regardless the species is considered to be a very healthy product and the consumption of fish is perceived as essential to obtain a balanced diet. Nevertheless, dietary recommendations of eating fish twice a week are not met by a large group of consumers in many countries. Results from the consumer survey carried out in Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Spain and Poland indicated that health beliefs, such as health involvement, interest in healthy eating, subjective health (how individuals evaluate their own health) and people's satisfaction with their own life may be important in the development of effective strategies for stimulating seafood communication.

In general, people were found to be very involved with health and very interested in healthy eating. However, significant differences in the health beliefs existed between countries. Danish respondents evaluated themselves as the healthiest and the most satisfied with their life; Polish respondents were the most interested in healthy eating, whereas Belgian respondents were the most involved in health. Interestingly, Spanish respondents did not score the highest on any of the health beliefs, although they reported the highest fish consumption. This could imply that fish consumption in Spain is rather a habit, a tradition of eating fish as a part of a Mediterranean diet, than a consequence of health belief. Further analysis showed that consumption of fish seemed to be dependent on consumers' interest in healthy eating and risk perception of food poisoning from eating fish. On the other hand, total fish consumption, together with interest in healthy eating, health involvement and risk perception influenced self-rated consumers' health. This means that people who ate more fish, those who were more interested in healthy eating, and more involved in their health, would feel themselves as healthier, whereas those consumers who perceived higher risk of food poisoning from eating fish would feel themselves as less healthy.

Although medical information sources are highly trusted, they are not really utilised with regard to fish information by consumers. Health benefits, safety guarantee and quality mark are the most wanted fish information cues for respondents interested in healthy eating and involved with health in general.