

Research: The ambitious SeafoodPlus project

Kicked off in January 2004, SeafoodPlus has a budget of € 26 million supported by the European Union.

The scope of the SeafoodPlus project can be measured by its complexity and ambitions. More than 70 partners – research institutes or SMEs – from 16 European States are contributing to its 20 sub-projects. There is even a partner from outside Europe, the Canadian company Aquanet. SeafoodPlus is based on five strategic research and technology pillars that encompass all its sub-projects: human nutrition, consumer behaviour and well-being, safety and risk/benefit analysis, processing for consumption and aquaculture products. A sixth transversal area of research concerns traceability, essential to boosting consumer confidence.

"One of the objectives of SeafoodPlus is to change consumers' attitude to seafood products, to increase consumption of these products that are good for health and well-being", explains project coordinator Torger Borresen, of the Danish Fisheries Research Institute.



The SeafoodPlus project is expected to result in better knowledge of sea products and their nutritional and health qualities.

"To achieve that objective, we need to increase the quality and safety of seafood products, develop new products and invest in traceability and reliability. And all that needs to be done in line with consumers' needs and demands. The project is not lacking in ambition. That is why we have taken on board the best researchers in the fields concerned."

The integration of the natural sciences and the social sciences is doubtless one of the programme's most innovative aspects. *"Most consumers already know that seafood products are good for them. Communicating that idea will have little influence on their choices,"* notes Karen Brunso, coordinator of the SeafoodPlus projects relating to consumers' attitudes and behaviour. *"To stimulate greater consumption*

of seafood, we have to know more about consumer perceptions and habits. That will help us to develop more products that correspond to their needs."

One key piece has to fit into the puzzle, however: the limited availability of fishery resources. John Farnell, Director for Conservation Policy at the European Commission's DG Fisheries, highlights that aspect:

"We hope the knowledge gained and the products developed by SeafoodPlus will lead the seafood industry to make better suited and more economic use of increasingly scarce marine resources. In parallel, important economic outlets for the seafood industry could be identified, encouraging operators to improve resource management."

Anne-Caroline RENARD



Karen Brunso: "To stimulate greater consumption of seafood, we have to know more about consumer perceptions and habits."



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