



Launching a new Integrated Research Project:

SEAFOODplus

Seafood for consumer health and well-being

The EU is sponsoring an integrated seafood research project that for its form and scale is unique throughout Europe. The main focus of SEAFOODplus is consumers and their need and desire for healthy products. It will be concerned with tailor-made products, better utilization of by-products, ethically acceptable fish farming and more besides.

The launching of the project will be presented 22 January 2004 in Brussels. At this occasion the ambitious goals will be presented and the major players will explain why the different targets will be pursued in the societal context. For detailed programme, see the enclosed document.

The way is free for the biggest research project that the EU has ever sponsored in the seafood sector – not only with regard to the total budget sum of about 26 m €, of which the European Commission contributes 14.4 m €, but also with regard to the content and complexity of the research programme. It takes into account all the different stages within the value-adding chain and hardly any aspect will be omitted from the investigations. The programme will focus on consumers' demands for healthy, safe products that have been produced using sustainable, environment-friendly methods and processed using state-of-the-art techniques. For example, how does feed composition influence fish quality, which ingredients are lost during processing, how can so-called waste be put to good use, what is the attitude of consumers about seafood, and what health benefits do fish products have to offer apart from Omega 3 fatty acids? The researchers have 4½ years to investigate these issues: on fish farms, in laboratories, with consumers, at processing facilities and in hospitals.

More than 70 partners involved

SEAFOODplus has not only high scientific standard but also a broad networking of sub-projects between themselves. More than 70 partners from 16 European states, among them both research institutes and small and middle-sized companies, are co-operating in sub-projects. Also outside Europe there has been an interest in participating, so the Canadian enterprise 'Aquanet' is also a partner in the project. Altogether, there are 20 sub-projects embedded in the Integrated research Project SEAFOODplus.

Project started 1 January 2004

For the duration of the programme, Professor Torger Børresen, a Danish fisheries research scientist will be in charge of the overall leadership and responsibility for this key project. He will be supported in his work by a council consisting of 12 key experts covering the entire scope of the project. One of their tasks will be the coordination and management of the closely linked projects and dissemination activities.

Research projects divided into five areas

SEAFOODplus is subdivided into five strategic clusters, which will constitute the pillars upon which the overall project rests. Each of the individual projects deals with an exactly defined topic and can be allocated to at least one of these pillars.

A sixth important topic area is devoted to problems of traceability, which recently have gained more significance. The implementation of functioning traceability systems from the live fish to the final ready-to-eat product is thus indispensable. The SEAFOODplus researchers named this concept 'fork to farm'.

Commercial companies integrated within the project

Special attention will be devoted to co-operation with small and middle-sized companies. After all, a lot of the research projects should ultimately deliver results that can be put to commercial use afterwards. This applies in particular to new technologies, which will create economic benefits for their users.

Fast distribution of results

There will be a special team whose job it will be to distribute the research results. This group will use the full spectrum of modern communication options to make politicians, consumers and companies in Europe familiar with the important results from the projects: via, for example, specialist publications, the Internet, leaflets, presence at conferences and trade fairs, interviews and press releases.

Company applications still possible

Even after the start of the project, partners can be changed or new partners added, and small and middle-sized companies still have the chance today to work with SEAFOODplus. This particularly applies to innovative European companies that are interested in the implementation of new research results or technologies. They can contact the responsible parties directly via the SEAFOODplus website to apply for participation in individual projects.

More information is available at www.seafoodplus.org