

Deliverable D3.1

Report on consumer awareness, perception and acceptance of European aquaculture and methods

The main aim of the study was to reveal consumer awareness, perception and acceptance of four European aquaculture production systems: conventional, organic, RAS and IMTA.

One of the objectives addressed in this study was to assess consumer awareness and perceptions of feed, products and production methods through surveys in five European countries. The results from this study will be used in designing a communication strategy and increase the transparency of the sector.

Previous research has shown the complexity in consumer awareness, perceptions and acceptance, but there are knowledge gaps related to the specific context of low consumer awareness about aquaculture and the specific production system practices. The definition of how low this awareness is and the reasons behind acceptance will benefit the design of a strategic increase of awareness about aquaculture. Informed consumers could be more positive towards the benefits of new and sustainable production approaches, without being influenced by the scepticism that naturally follows confrontation with unknown technological advantages in food production.

A survey on a representative sample of 2500 consumers from UK, France, Germany, Spain and Italy focused awareness, perception and acceptance related to aquaculture in general, as well as the specific production systems, resulting products and feed ingredients. The survey also covered explanatory information such as health interest, social and demographic characteristics.

Consumer acceptance of aquaculture production systems varied with attitudes, perception and how familiar European consumers are with them. There is a clear indication for higher scores in acceptance for conventional and organic aquaculture, compared to RAS and IMTA, but this appears to be mostly due to low familiarity with the production methods and what they entail.

Engaging in targeted communication towards European consumers with the aim to maintain and improve positive attitudes and perceived benefits with the aquaculture systems could lead to measurable improvements in perception and acceptance of aquaculture production methods.

About Work Package 3

The aim of WP3 is to develop and test communication strategies that will increase consumer awareness, perception and acceptance of European aquaculture products and methods. WP3 will also assess regulatory challenges in aquaculture production related to access to new production sites.

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