

The magazine for the seafood industry

# *the* longliner

[www.seafish.org](http://www.seafish.org)

Issue 5



# Welcome

## Welcome to Issue 5 of *The Longliner*.

This issue puts the spotlight on standards across various sectors of the seafood industry, from aquaculture through to the fish and chip trade.

It also features the first in a series of guides to help steer you through the myriad of regulation that applies to the industry – starting at the top with Codex.

I hope you enjoy the magazine. Please get in touch with any comments or suggestions for content.

**An interactive version of *The Longliner* is now available on the Seafish website under the 'what's new' tab at [www.seafish.org](http://www.seafish.org)**

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## Contents

### Features

- 3 Legislation:**  
How it affects the seafood industry.
- 4 Guest Writer**  
Jenny Fyall, Environment Correspondent at *The Scotsman* on how journalists see the sea.
- 8 Smooth transition for new IUU regulations**  
How are the IUU regulations impacting the Port Authorities?
- 12 Aquaculture**  
Certification gathers pace.
- 16 Battering the competition**  
Giovanni Fiondwrites about how high standards have driven improvements in his award-winning business.

### Regulars

- 6 Seafood Hero**  
Bill Mooney of Ruskim Seafoods reflects on standards.
- 10 Head to Head**  
Do standards schemes add value to the supply chain?
- 11 Market Watch**  
Up to the minute seafood data.
- 14 Market Insight**  
Consumer perceptions of chilled and frozen markets.

## News in brief

### The recession will leave a lasting legacy on food and grocery shopping

According to data from IGD, more than three quarters (77%) of those who have already made some changes to their food and grocery shopping specifically as a result of the recession expect to stick with their new habits even if the economy improves.

### Bluefin tuna main course of CITES world conference



New measures to conserve and manage bluefin tuna stocks sustainably are being proposed by governments attending the next triennial world conference of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in Doha, Qatar, from 13 to 25 March.

Last month, MEPs voted in favour of a ban of international commercial trade in Atlantic bluefin tuna. Seafish is also calling on the European Union to improve compliance with scientific advice with regard to the northern bluefin stock, including the close monitoring of vessels operating in Mediterranean waters.

*The Longliner* is edited by Gaynyr Dickson with contributions from Lorna Jack, Karen Green and Fiona Wright.

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# Legislation:

## How it affects the seafood industry

by Fiona Wright, Food Standards Officer at Seafish

*This is the first in a series of articles that will appear in The Longliner on the legislative process and how it affects the seafood industry.*

*Legislation starts at a global level, with bodies such as the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) issuing guidance and recommendations. Independent scientific bodies, such as The International Council of the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), also influence where, when and how much seafood can be caught.*

### Global food standards

Codex Alimentarius is a collection of internationally recognised standards, codes of practice, guidelines and other recommendations relating to food, food production and food safety, all of which are based on the principle of sound scientific analysis. The texts are developed by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, a body that was established in 1963 by the UN (FAO) and WHO.

The publication of the Codex Alimentarius is intended to guide and promote the elaboration and establishment of definitions and requirements for foods to assist in their harmonisation and, in doing so, to facilitate international trade.

An increasing number of countries are aligning their national food standards, or parts of them, with those of Codex Alimentarius. This is particularly so in the case of additives and contaminants.

[http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/index\\_en.jsp](http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/index_en.jsp)

### Scientific advice

ICES is responsible for providing scientific advice for managing the North East Atlantic fishery, which covers all the waters around the UK. Similar organisations exist for other fisheries management areas.

ICES advice comes from the Advisory Committee (ACOM) and expert working and study groups. ICES will propose a range of advice based on different scenarios. On the basis of this advice, the EU Council stipulates management measures such as Total Allowable Catch

(TAC) limits, limits on the number of days that boats can spend at sea, closed areas and closed seasons, as well as technological measures such as the selectivity of fishing gears.

<http://www.ices.dk>

### The European Union (EU)

The EU fisheries sector is one of the most significant players influencing the state of the marine environment. The EU has a unique structure. Understanding how it operates is one step towards potentially influencing, or at least being actively involved in, the decision-making process.

The EU is made up of 27 Member States who remain independent nations, but who join forces where necessary to have a greater power and influence on the world stage.

Member States delegate some of their decision-making powers to the shared institutions they have created, so that decisions on specific matters of joint interest can be made democratically at European level.

Internally, the EU's decision-making process involves three main institutions:

- the European Parliament (EP), which represents the EU's citizens and is directly elected by them;
- the Council of the European Union, which represents the individual member states;
- the European Commission, which seeks to uphold the interests of the Union as a whole. The Commission acts like the 'civil service' of the Union, headed by 20 commissioners, two of whom are British. The Commission also initiates much of the policy and therefore receives the attention of various lobby groups.

This 'institutional triangle' produces the policies and laws that apply throughout the EU. In principle, it is the Commission that proposes new laws, but it is the Parliament and Council that adopt them. The Commission and the Member States then implement them, and the Commission ensures that the laws are properly taken on board.

In the next issue of *The Longliner* we will look in more detail at the components of this legislative triangle that are more active in the decision making process.

### Key bodies and instruments influencing and advising European decision making



Source: EU Fisheries Decision Making Guide, IEEP, September 2008.

“A strong or imaginative quote can lift a story from the dreary to the controversial and interesting – people love an argument.”

# Seafood and read it

– *how journalists see the sea*



*Jenny Fyall, Environment Correspondent at The Scotsman, discusses what makes the front page.*

**T**he sea and all the mysteries hidden in its depths have sparked the imaginations of the greatest minds for centuries.

As long ago as 1751, Scottish author Tobias Smollett described a fiend, Davy Jones, who sat on the rigging of ships during disasters, with his saucer eyes, three rows of teeth, horns, tail, and blue smoke coming from his nostrils.

The expression ‘Davy Jones’s Locker’ is only one example of how the other-worldliness, power, danger and mystery of the oceans feed our imaginations.

The watery depths have led to endless stories and fables, including Scotland’s very own money-spinner, the Loch Ness Monster.

However, although the sea undeniably sparks the imagination, does this inevitably mean it also produces great news stories?

Unfortunately, I do not think so. In fact, I would argue it is the very mystery and other-worldliness of the sea, the way it is removed from the day-to-day lives of the vast majority of the population, that can make it difficult to get issues to do with the marine environment in the newspapers.

I don’t want to exaggerate – there is no shortage of stories about marine issues in the press. They appear in some form on

an almost daily basis. However, it could be argued that considering oceans cover nearly three quarters of the Earth’s surface, and are vital for the wellbeing and survival of the planet, they do not get quite as much attention as they deserve.

**“There are no hard and fast rules as to how to get coverage of important marine issues in order to engage with the public.”**

### **A case in point**

In February, a day at the Scottish Parliament was taken up with the third and final reading of the draft legislation of the Scottish Marine Bill. Due to the importance of the issues under discussion there were more than 70 amendments to be debated during that onerous day.

Finally the amendments had all been discussed, and the legislation voted through. This stage had only

been reached after vast and presumably impassioned input behind the scenes from a wide range of interested groups – from renewables organisations, through marine conservation bodies, to groups such as Seafish, representing the seafood industry.

However, how much coverage did that momentous day attract in the newspapers? Absolutely none.

Why was this? Was it because it wasn’t important? No, of course not. Was it because all journalists in Scotland are lazy and did not bother to follow what was going on? Certainly not. I for one sat and listened to every single amendment being debated during that final reading, via online Holyrood TV. So why no coverage?

The answer is that not everything that is important, even potentially life changing, is of interest to the average reader of *The Scotsman*, or any other mainstream newspaper.

Would Joe Bloggs in Edinburgh really pay his 80 pence for a *Scotsman* to find out whether a list was going to be kept by Scottish Natural Heritage of Marine Protected Areas? To people with a particular interest in the subject, this is doubtless an interesting issue.



To the 'average' reader of a daily newspaper, who has many, many choices of how to spend his time and money, it is probably not the most pressing subject to read about that day.

### So what makes a news story?

That is, of course, the million dollar question. What will persuade the editor that he should devote precious space to that particular issue in the following day's paper?

Being new is one criterion, but that alone is not enough. One of the best tips I was given during my training was to put the story idea through the 'pub test'.

If you found out a particular piece of information, would you tell your friends about it in the pub that evening? Or your family about it over dinner? Would they react with shock, amusement, interest and want to know more, or would their eyes glaze over? If it is an issue that would leave you stranded alone with your pint after you had bored your friends into making their excuses and leaving, it is probably not a story.

Usually a good story is something that people can identify with, or that has a direct or indirect impact on their lives. It is a sad fact that a fire that injured one person will be of more interest to a person living on the same street than an earthquake that killed hundreds in a far-off country.

So it is arguably the very mystery of the sea, removed as it is from most people's lives, that has rendered it a difficult subject for news stories.

The key is to make it relevant to the reader. An example of how Seafish does this well is the annual Fish & Chip Shop of the Year contest. This scores top points in the pub test. Nearly everyone wants to know where to buy the tastiest fish supper.

### Presenting the issue

The way an issue is presented is crucial. The word 'sustainability' can send people to sleep, but what are the consequences of overfished seafood? Choice is limited and options more expensive, and one day may not be available at all. Bingo! Suddenly it is pretty important to lots of people.

Most people who enjoy seafood have an interest in the state of stocks, if only to know whether they will be able to get cod for less than a fiver in the supermarket.

Is there another fish on the market that tastes the same as cod, but is cheaper? If it is more plentiful and sustainable that is a benefit too, although probably not as interesting to readers as the price difference.

### Grabbing the readers' attention

Many of the debates in which the marine sector is involved can similarly be made relevant to Joe Bloggs Edinburgh as he drinks his coffee or sits on the bus.

Take the annual fishing quotas. On one level this involves an important but minority sector of society – making it something that arguably should be relegated to the 'fishing pages', or just left to specialist publications.

However, on another level, quotas affect almost every household in Scotland because they have a direct impact on what will be available for dinner.

Of course people aren't so narcissistic that they only want to read stories directly relevant to them, but generally they must otherwise have a shock factor, or be interesting enough to hold attention.

Big numbers help. Scotland's fisheries secretary Richard Lochhead used this technique well when he highlighted the issue of discards, describing 100,000 tonnes of thrown-back fish, worth £40 million. The discovery of bizarre new species works well – and the more colour about the creature to bring it to life the better.

Offshore renewables just about pass the pub test, if they are either big or bizarre enough to attract the imagination. They do not spark the immediate strong reaction of onshore turbines, which are more obviously relevant to the lives of readers in that most people, whether through nimbyism or not, don't seem to want them near their homes.

A strong or imaginative quote can lift a story from the dreary to the controversial and interesting – people love an argument.

There are no hard and fast rules as to how to get coverage of important marine issues in order to engage with the public. However, being available, being opinionated, feeding the imagination and being relevant are the best tips I can give.



## SEAFOOD HERO

*Bill Mooney, Managing Director and founder of Ruskim Seafoods, reflects on his career in the seafood industry and on how standards have changed during that time.*

*Ruskim Seafoods, a family company, has depots in Telford, Newcastle, London, Warminster and Ireland and a fleet of more than 70 refrigerated vehicles. It operates five cold stores, with a combined capacity of 10,000 tonnes, from which it distributes seafood, meat and poultry to more than 3,000 catering outlets, shops, supermarkets, distributors and processors.*

“Exporters to the EU today are faced with many different types of accreditation and have to decide which ones to adhere to.”

### **The early days**

A great deal has changed since I entered the seafood business in 1967. I began work with a seafood company in Liverpool, packing cockles, mussels and prawns in cartons during the day and selling them in local pubs in the evenings.

In 1982, my wife Lesley and I started our own business, Ruskim Seafoods, named after our children, Russell and Kim. I would buy frozen seafood from local suppliers and distribute it to Chinese, Indian and Bangladeshi restaurants and takeaways. Things have moved along at a pace in the intervening 28 years.

As the company grew, I looked at the possibility of importing directly from supplying countries. Our main products at that time were frozen prawns (seawater and freshwater) and exotic fish. The countries supplying these products to the UK

at that time included Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia. I knew the brands that my customers preferred and consequently the companies who produced them. The problem was obtaining the bank facilities and the knowledge needed to enable me to buy directly. I persuaded our bankers to grant us a modest letter of credit facility and set about trying to find an honest and reliable agent (not an easy task). I targeted Pakistan as the first country I should try to conquer.

In the 80s and 90s, Pakistan was a major supplier to the UK ethnic market. Eventually, I located an agent, visited a number of potential suppliers and took the plunge. I was lucky; I didn't suffer any major catastrophes that could well have befallen a new and very green importer, dealing with some very tricky and experienced exporters, in a country like Pakistan.

I do shiver a little when I recall the UK company that received a tip off and demanded to make a second check on a container hours before it was to be loaded onto a vessel bound for Southampton from a dock in Karachi. The \$100,000 cargo of prawns had changed into a worthless consignment of rotting fish. This was a lucky escape for the company involved – if it had happened to Ruskim, we would not exist today.

It gives me no pleasure at all to say that I was so engrossed in becoming a direct importer, I failed to notice or, more accurately, turned a blind eye to the unhygienic conditions in most of the processing plants and the ages of the workers who worked under less than acceptable conditions. This was still a long time before EU approval numbers were required or available and also well before the EU had considered the need to inspect the conditions in these factories.

These EU measures were much needed and welcomed by us. As time went on, Ruskim Seafoods became a major importer, procuring seafood worldwide. Today we import directly from more than 20 countries on five continents, receiving up to 60 tonnes of imported seafood into our cold stores every day. We were very proud to receive the 'Friend of India' award in 2006, in recognition of 'the contribution made to the development of the seafood trade between India and the UK'. This is awarded to one company in Europe, Japan and America every two years by the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) and the seafood export authority of India.

### The impact of EU legislation

India is still a major supplier of seafood to the EU and the problems they have had in complying with ever more stringent EU and customer requirements are shared by many more third world suppliers of seafood. In 1997, India was banned from exporting seafood to the EU. The warning signs had not been heeded and the EU imposed a ban that was to last almost two years.

This was the kick in the pants that Indian processors and the Indian authorities needed. The improvements made in the factories during the period of the ban were revolutionary. Seafood entrepreneurs spent large sums of money upgrading their factories to the standards required by the EU inspectors. However, the Indian authorities had been slower to improve the common infrastructure, such as fish landing areas and water supply, and in 1999 they narrowly escaped having a further ban imposed.



Bill Mooney, Ruskim Seafood

“Wherever possible we source from exporters with accreditations evidencing their commitment to care for the environment.”

There are still problems today, mainly with the Indian seafood testing laboratories. In a recent letter to the Indian government following a visit by EU inspectors, the EU's Food and Veterinary Office described the Indian system of residue monitoring as 'structurally flawed and ineffective'. They also expressed displeasure about the fact that concerns raised by its previous audit teams were not addressed and have threatened to ban Indian imports again if the authorities fail to provide an acceptable guarantee.

This highlights a problem that has existed in India for many years – despite the EU being India's main market for seafood, the warning signs are not heeded and their responses to constructive criticisms seem always to lack the urgency required.

### Accreditation schemes

Exporters to the EU today are faced with many different types of accreditation and have to decide which ones to adhere to, based on their customers' requirements. The Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) standard was used to improve factory systems to eliminate food safety hazards, helping the factory workers to become more aware of food safety issues, whilst ISO 22000 improved food and plant security systems.

Many of our smaller business customers still do not request evidence that we supply seafood sourced from environmentally aware and responsible exporters. However, our larger customers, such as processors, large ethnic supermarkets and distributors are certainly becoming more aware of the importance of being associated with seafood sourced from environmentally friendly sources. Consequently, wherever possible, we source from exporters with accreditations evidencing their commitment to care for the environment.

One of the main accreditations recognised within the EU is the ACC (Aquaculture Certification Council) BAP (Best Aquaculture Practice) which ensures our suppliers are environmentally friendly and socially responsible. It means we are able to trace farmed seafood products from seeding, throughout the process, until distribution to customers, and support sustainable aquaculture. MSC certification, whilst not being applied to any extent by our suppliers, is an important and respected accreditation within the seafood industry.

Whilst the accreditations mentioned are applied for by the processors, exporters must comply with a number of compulsory measures stipulated by the EU in order to export to EU member countries. The most obvious of these is an EU approval number, which ensures an establishment is meeting and sustaining certain standards required to qualify them to export to EU markets.

Another very important requirement recently introduced by the EU requires all seafood (with certain exceptions) caught on or after 1st January 2010 and being exported to the EU to have a catch certificate, known as an IUU certificate. This IUU certificate has been introduced to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing.

### Changing attitudes

We visit our suppliers once a year in most cases. It is clear to see how standards have improved over the years and also how the attitude of the owners and managers has changed. Opposition to the ever increasing amount of regulation has turned into realisation that by obtaining the standards required to receive an accreditation, they are opening up new markets for themselves. Undoubtedly, the changes in standards in certain seafood exporting countries are due mainly to external pressures from customers and outside government legislation rather than from their own internal agencies, but it has resulted in a much improved worldwide seafood industry.

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1 January 2010 was D-Day for implementing the new EU regulation on illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The new rules mean all imports of fish from third countries, caught in 2010, must now be accompanied by a catch certificate proving that the fish has been caught legally.

But what impact has this new regulation had on the flow of imports into the UK, and into the EU as a whole? Are there issues that need to be resolved? Karen Green, Industry Environmental Communications Executive at Seafish, investigates.

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# Smooth transition for new IUU Regulation

**The early indications are that the UK was well prepared for the new IUU regulations. The flow of information was good and importers and processors were properly briefed. As a result, imports have continued unimpeded and there has been a smooth introduction of the new catch certificates.**

The areas of real concern were the catch certificates themselves, their validation, and the fact that all third countries wanting to trade fisheries products with the EU had to notify the European Commission of their Competent Authorities.

## Imports continue unimpeded

With frozen fish being imported into the EU it will be some months before all fish will require a catch certificate. Fish caught in 2009 does not require this certificate and Defra developed an exemption statement to aid clearance (available on the Defra website). It has certainly helped that the majority of imports of 2009 fish have been accompanied by a statement confirming date of catch.

Port Health Officers at Heathrow Airport planned ahead by meeting with clearing agents, liaising with importers and maintaining regular contact with Defra. Time was also spent helping clearing agents to complete 'dummy' certificates as a forerunner to the real thing.

As anticipated, Heathrow was the first Border Inspection Post in the United Kingdom to receive a catch certificate – on 2 January.

"It has all gone very smoothly," said Nicholas Green, Team Leader (Products of Animal Origin), London Borough of

Hillingdon. "Much of this is because clearing agents and importers have taken time to ensure that catch certificates are completed correctly. We are generally receiving one catch certificate per consignment, which includes a detailed breakdown of the fishery products and the fishing vessels. We have also received a number of consignments accompanied by multiple catch certificates. The maximum number of certificates that we have seen accompanying one consignment is six.

**"We are very pleased with how all parties involved have adapted to the requirements of the new Regulation."**

"There has been no decline in the number of consignments received – in fact numbers are high at the moment. Inevitably, the introduction of the scheme has resulted in a slight increase in paperwork but this has not been as significant as was first anticipated. We are very pleased with how all parties involved have adapted," he said.

Imports of fresh fish from Iceland, Norway and the Faroe Islands into Grimsby and Immingham have continued uninterrupted, once again attributed to the proactive approach adopted by the local Port Health Authority. Imports of frozen fish from third countries are still 2009

catches and have been accompanied by statements to confirm this.

Chris Melville, Principal Environmental Health Officer, North East Lincolnshire Borough Council said: "We already had a good working relationship with the Icelandic carriers and by meeting with them in advance we have been able to iron out any potential problems. Icelandic fish now has to be treated in the same way as all imported fish and this has inevitably created extra paperwork – potentially five pages per consignment, and an average of 100 consignments per week."

## Catch certificates

The catch certificates themselves are at the heart of the new regulation and were a prime area of concern.

Kirsty Dawes, of the Suffolk Coastal Port Health Authority (PHA), was seconded to Defra to help with the implementation of the more practical aspects of the scheme, with a focus on checks of the catch certificates at import.

"Defra was able to brief Port Health in advance and a training event was held for Port Health officers, with a specific guidance document on checks at port published. Whilst this might seem to be an obvious step in dealing with new legislation, in a lot of instances EU deadlines mean that training and guidance is not available before implementation.

"The training has also meant that the Local Authorities and Port Health Authorities could look ahead and help businesses by providing information on the regulations; as well as checking and commenting on draft certificates before formal submission.



# Change

“At Suffolk Coastal PHA, we have just started receiving fishery products from fish caught in 2010, but have commented on a number of certificates, and worked closely with importers to help them comply with the law. On the whole we have been very impressed with the quality of the catch certificates.

“The jury is still out about concerns of a ‘paper tsunami’ caused by the introduction of catch certificates. For some countries and trades there was the potential for a single consignment to be accompanied by hundreds of certificates. In these cases the way forward is a single catch certificate covering the consignment, accompanied by a schedule of landings. This significantly reduces the amount of documentation produced,” said Kirsty.

## Outstanding issues

Concerns about enforcement were raised at the recent Seafish Importers Committee meeting and these need to be resolved. Importers wanted more clarity on the enforcement policy that Port Health would be following where an error was identified, such as a missing CN code on a certificate.

There have also been some complaints from other Member States that the general language of the certificates is English, which doesn’t suit them. The position of importers who may inadvertently accept fraudulent certificates was also raised and a protocol for due diligence will be developed by Seafish.

Further streamlining of the UK catch certificate process will take place to cope with the huge number of individual

landings in exported consignments, particularly of Nephrops. The UK IUU Catch Certificate Centre will be part of the Marine Management Organisation’s International Fisheries Enforcement Office, due to open at Billingsgate.

## Notification of third countries

There are issues surrounding notification. All third countries who want to import into the EU must now notify the European Commission of their Competent Authorities. Only those countries that have completed this notification process will be eligible to export to the Community. Catch certificates are validated by the Competent Authorities in the flag state of the vessel that caught the fish.

Russia has proved a complex case. They are a major exporter to the EU, but did not submit notification of their Competent Authorities to the European Commission until late February 2010. The Commission has clearly stated that notifications cannot be applied retrospectively, so fish can only be traded that was caught after the date of notification. It is important that importers and processors take careful notice of voyage dates to ensure they know the date of the catch for imports from Russia. The EU will be watching trade flows very carefully to monitor this.

## Smooth transition

“We have imported a large number of seafood consignments through Heathrow since 1 January 2010 without problem and I have been very impressed with how smoothly this new system has been

implemented in the UK,” said Peter Stagg, Chairman and Founder of Le Lien Ltd, a major EU seafood importer with a product portfolio of more than 50 different fish and shellfish lines sourced from 35 countries around the world.

“This is all down to preparation. We were very well briefed on what to expect at several preparation meetings held by Defra, in conjunction the LHR BIP. This meant that implementation of the new documentation has not been as onerous as I thought it might be. We were able to anticipate potential problems. We also made several dummy runs which were discussed with and commented on by both Defra and BIP before we went live on 1 January. This was extremely helpful.

“However, I hear some other EU Member States have had a few issues with incorrectly completed catch certificates, causing some delays in releasing cargos.”

Peter added: “A lot of our processors around the world took advantage of the knowledge we passed on to them and were able to export to other EU countries without hitch, because of Defra’s excellent work in briefing and training us properly. I thank them for that.”

## Seafish website

<http://www.tinyurl.com/seafish-iuu>

## Defra website

[www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/fisheries/marine/conservation/iuu-regulation.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/fisheries/marine/conservation/iuu-regulation.htm)



# Head to Head

*Andrew Mallison, Director of Standards and Licensing, Marine Stewardship Council*

**F**ood Standard Systems are designed to effect change and bring a range of benefits to everyone in the supply chain right through to the end consumer. With consumers and seafood buyers increasingly aware of the importance of healthy oceans, the assurance of being part of a secure, traceable supply chain selling seafood that meets a credible science-based sustainability standard makes good business sense.

The supply chain can benefit in a number of ways. 'Net Benefits', a collection of interviews with certified fisheries (available on the MSC website), reports the following advantages: secure contracts; access to new markets; good reputation; economic stability; confidence in the future; as well as price premiums for some fisheries.

For the supply chain, a credible standard like the MSC can offer a unique selling point, preferred supplier status, improved traceability, new contracts and stable supplies.

For the retail sector, brands, foodservice and restaurants, the benefits include assurance of provenance, evidence of sustainable sourcing, new product development options and communications opportunities that result in customer loyalty, enhanced brand equity and improved corporate reputation.

The difficult economic climate is a real test of whether a food standard is a 'nice to have' or is genuinely important to the supply chain. In the last year, the number of fisheries entering the programme grew by 52% and the number of companies certified for MSC Chain of Custody grew by more than 40%. The number of MSC-labelled products on sale around the world grew by 56% with annual sales of more than US\$1.5 billion at retail value.

Yes

# Q

**“Do standards schemes add value to the supply chain?”**

**“There is no doubt that the standard of food sold to today’s consumer is higher than it has ever been.”**

*Iain MacSween, Chief Executive of the Scottish Fishermen's Organisation*

**T**here is no doubt that the standard of food sold to today's consumer is higher than it has ever been. And indeed the standards we see on our shelves are underpinned by many other "standards". Food producing factories have to meet criteria laid down by the retailers with whom they deal and there is an apparently endless list of standards awarded by a wide range of bodies.

Has the introduction of all these standards and accreditation schemes resulted in higher prices for the primary producers? Emphatically not has to be the answer.

The multiple retailers have had much more success than government ever did in bringing food price inflation under control. As a result, we have seen a period of price deflation in the food sector. With milk selling for less than water and the price of some shellfish unchanged for 20 years, despite escalating operating costs, it is hard to see how anyone can claim the introduction of accreditation schemes has benefitted the primary producer.

The reality is that most primary producers are now price takers and the global nature of food production means that if you will not supply at the price offered, someone somewhere in the world will. Historically it was all very different. The Crown Brand awarded to herring was the guarantee of a price premium. As most accreditation schemes say nothing about quality, it is perhaps not surprising that the impact on price is zero. It still takes a discerning consumer who knows his product to secure a premium price and not the application of uniform standards that few comprehend.

No



**Dr Lorna Jack**  
Seafish Market Planning

## Retail Overview

The retail seafood market received a year end boost with value sales up 4.2% to £2.85 billion and volume sales down only -0.5% to 381,300 tonnes. These are the best year-on-year sales figures since November 2008. (Nielsen Scan track 52 w/e 26.12.09.)

Sales of seafood, particularly fresh seafood, tend to pick up during the festive season and this would certainly seem to be the case with fresh, up 3.6% in value and up 3.8% in volume compared to last year. The figures may have been further boosted by seafood's particularly poor performance last year, when fears over the recession were at their height.

Sales of salmon and warm water prawns were up on last year, with warm water prawns jumping ahead of cold water prawns to take the number four position in GB seafood sales for the first time.

The frozen market is up in value but down in volume. This could mean that either price rises are forcing shoppers to buy less frozen seafood or, more likely with the new frozen products on the market, shoppers are trading up within the frozen category.

The ambient market has seen the lowest volume decrease this year with volume down 3.5% compared to falls of 7.2% in October 2009. This suggests that the market may be starting to re-adjust to the price rises in the canned tuna market.

# Market watch

the guide to what's going on in the seafood market

## Table key

**MAT LY** – moving annual total last year,  
i.e. 52 weeks data  
**MAT TY** – moving annual total this year

**MAT 2 YA** – moving annual total two years ago  
**% Chg YA** – percentage compared to one year ago  
**WE** – week ending

## Top 20 species (fresh and frozen total coverage)

	Value (£'000s)			Volume (tonnes)		
	MAT LY	MAT TY	% Chg YA	MAT LY	MAT TY	% Chg YA
Salmon	498,008	537,235	7.9	35,385	37,443	5.8
Cod	338,794	315,504	-6.9	44,982	40,800	-9.3
Haddock	208,705	214,243	2.7	22,579	23,640	4.7
Warm water prawns	171,579	187,887	9.5	13,372	15,116	13.0
Cold water prawns	165,714	164,414	-0.8	18,609	18,012	-3.2
Pollock	53,727	77,989	45.2	11,622	16,334	40.5
Mackerel	62,432	63,544	1.8	10,195	10,418	2.2
Scampi	56,742	57,577	1.5	5,842	6,196	6.1
Tuna	45,035	40,457	-10.2	2,641	2,371	-10.2
Trout	42,824	40,079	-6.4	4,699	4,332	-7.8
Plaice	33,409	30,053	-10.0	3,470	3,023	-12.9
Sole	28,629	27,999	-2.2	2,044	2,020	-1.2
Seabass	22,945	23,754	3.5	1,375	1,476	7.4
Mussels	17,053	21,534	26.3	2,997	4,071	35.8
Seafood sticks	18,916	17,785	-6.0	5,282	4,288	-18.8
Kipper	14,354	16,757	16.7	2,956	3,179	7.5
Scallops	14,152	15,159	7.1	692	779	12.6
Crab	8,841	8,726	-1.3	526	501	-4.8
Pangasius (Basa)	5,920	8,594	45.2	721	1,061	47.1
Coley	8,433	7,613	-9.7	1,220	1,077	-11.7

## Sector shares – total coverage

	Value (£'000s)		
	MAT to WE 27.12.09	MAT to WE 26.12.09	% Chg
Seafood	2,731,543	2,847,459	4.2
Fresh	1,516,038	1,571,103	3.6
Frozen	746,962	763,415	2.2
Ambient	468,543	512,941	9.5

	Volume (tonnes)		
	MAT to WE 27.12.09	MAT to WE 26.12.09	% Chg
Seafood	383,348	381,337	-0.5
Fresh	136,311	141,434	3.8
Frozen	137,836	134,473	-2.4
Ambient	109,201	105,430	-3.5

### Data note

Nielsen is the leading supplier of information and data in the UK retail market. Nielsen Scantrack monitors weekly sales from a national network of checkout scanners and represents sales in more than 74,000 stores.

# Aquaculture certification gathers pace

*Karen Green, Industry Environmental Communications Executive at Seafish, reviews the development of aquaculture standards underway through four separate organisations.*

**M**any retail and foodservice companies are responding to consumer and NGO pressure by encouraging certification of their seafood suppliers. There has been a proliferation of aquaculture certification programs. This plethora of certification bodies and associated labels can provide a problem for the farmer and the consumer.

*“Many consumers abdicate responsibility to the retailer or foodservice provider assuming they will only source from responsible suppliers.”*

Both environmental and economic pressures support the certification of aquaculture production. It allows a supplier to demonstrate ‘responsibility’ by minimising impact on the environment, making the best use of locally available resources, making the right choices as far as labour rights in the third world, complying with national legislation and ensuring the best use of feed and therapeutic products.

Consumer choice is not enough to drive this – many consumers abdicate responsibility to the retailer or foodservice provider assuming they will only source from responsible suppliers. Retailers and foodservice providers are taking the lead in driving this initiative.

Typically, producers have to bear the cost of implementing certification. Faced with conflicting schemes, producers could decide to meet multiple standards and pay for multiple audits, or minimise cost and apply for one scheme. Equally, just because a food product does not have an ecolabel or certification brand, it can still comply with a national government sponsored standard equal to, or exceeding, a voluntary sector label.

## WWF Aquaculture Dialogues

The Aquaculture Dialogues are a series of multi-stakeholder roundtable discussion groups committed to the development of robust standards for responsible aquaculture, based on metrics and performance data. The eight Dialogues cover twelve of the most important species globally, including tilapia and pangasius. The standards will address and minimise the main environmental and social impacts associated with each species.

Over 2,000 people have been involved in the development of the standards, including over 90 NGO’s, in a transparent process meeting International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling (ISEAL) guidelines. Most of the individual standards will be metrics-based and require operators to reach or not exceed certain measured parameters in order to gain or maintain certification.

The completed standards will be held by an independent organisation, the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), which is an independent non profit organisation founded by WWF and the Dutch Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH). It will manage the global standards for responsible aquaculture and is expected to be in full operation by mid-2011.

WWF has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with GLOBALGAP, which will offer an expansion to its program ensuring aquaculture producers can be certified in one step.

<http://www.worldwildlife.org/what/globalmarkets/aquaculture/aquaculturedialogues.html>

## Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA)



In 2009, the Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP) program achieved a major breakthrough in the UK as the BAP logo started to appear on packets of farmed prawns in leading supermarkets. The program was launched by the GAA in 1999 with the publication of a Code of Practice for Sustainable Shrimp Farming. When this code was transformed into an auditable standard, major players in the retail and food service sectors saw BAP as a valuable tool for assuring food safety, environmental

and social responsibility and traceability in farmed seafood.

As a result, 19 US retailers, including four of the five biggest, now require BAP labelled aquaculture products. In the UK three of the five largest retailers either sell BAP labelled products or require that products are sourced from BAP compliant farms and processors. This is an impressive achievement for GAA, a small, non-profit organisation that has adopted the ambitious byline 'feeding the world through responsible aquaculture'.

The suite of available BAP standards, developed by multi-stakeholder committees, now covers prawns, Channel catfish and tilapia, with pangasius (basa) due very shortly, along with salmon

and mussels. The total volume of BAP-sourced product is currently around 150,000 tonnes per year, and this figure is growing exponentially as interest in the programme takes off. BAP differs from other certification programs in that it has a much broader scope and is much more than an eco-label or a farm-gate assurance program. It covers the whole of the value chain including hatcheries, farms, feed mills and processors. The US-based Aquaculture Certification Council also applies GAA standards in its certification scheme.

[www.gaalliance.org](http://www.gaalliance.org)

## GLOBALGAP



GLOBALGAP is a private sector B2B initiative (without a consumer logo) that sets voluntary standards for the certification of agricultural products around the world. With twelve ISO 65 Accredited Certification Bodies, GLOBALGAP aquaculture standards are currently operating in eleven countries. There are certification standards

for shrimp, tilapia and pangasius. GLOBALGAP has also undertaken a revision of its feed standard.

The GLOBALGAP certification process offers a single integrated standard with modular applications for different product groups. With 37 retailer members, many operating globally, the goal is to harmonise retailer requirements. Through an equivalence or benchmarking system it is possible to recognise other schemes.

GLOBALGAP and the GAA have signed an agreement to work

co-operatively to provide producers with an opportunity to have a one-stop-shop audit on farm.

Until the launch of the Aquaculture Stewardship Council, GLOBALGAP will be responsible for arranging the certification of farms that comply with the Aquaculture Dialogue standards and issuing certificates of interim compliance.

[www.globalgap.org](http://www.globalgap.org)

## IFFO Global Responsibility Supply Standard for feed



In 2008, the International Fishmeal and Fish Oil Organisation (IFFO), which represents the majority of producers worldwide, developed a Global Standard for the Responsible Supply of fishmeal and fish oil as the basis of an independently audited business-to-business certification program. The program and Standard were developed by a multi-stakeholder group including

retailers, processors, feed suppliers, fish farmers, NGOs and certification experts.

The standard will enable fishmeal and fish oil producers to show that they are offering traceable, high quality marine products, manufactured safely, using fish from responsibly managed fisheries. Compliance will be third-party audited. Raw material sourcing must take place in a country which complies with the Food and Agriculture Organisation's Code of Responsible Fishing.

The IFFO program enables retailers and the whole value chain to demonstrate responsible supply of the fishmeal and fish oil ingredients in both aquaculture feeds and the feed of farmed animals and pets, and to use the IFFO-Assured logo on their products.

The program opened to applications in October 2009. Fifteen companies from four major producing countries, sourcing

from ten fisheries, are currently being audited. The scheme aims to create an independently audited system where members are rewarded with distinction within the market.

IFFO has just announced that Tecnológica de Alimentos S.A. (TASA) of Peru, the world's largest fishmeal producer, is the first producer to achieve certification under the new standard.

IFFO anticipates that there will be substantial supplies of IFFO-Assured fishmeal and fish oil on the market within months and that up to one third of global production could be certified by the end of 2010. The introduction of this program for fishmeal and fish oil is the first link in a fully certified aquaculture supply chain.

[www.iffo.net](http://www.iffo.net)



“Our research shows that fresh and frozen fish each have different characteristics that appeal to shoppers.”

# Consumer perceptions *of* chilled and frozen *markets*



**Dr Lorna Jack**  
*Seafish Market Planning*

**C**onsumer research is one of the most interesting areas of work for the Market Planning department. We investigate consumer behaviour, studying what decisions shoppers make when buying seafood, why they choose what they do and how much they know about the fishing industry.

We recently commissioned research on consumer perceptions of the chilled and frozen seafood markets. We wanted to understand current consumer perceptions and knowledge of the chilled and frozen markets, current usage of chilled and frozen seafood, if consumers behave differently when shopping for different categories and what shoppers know about the supply chains involved in both markets.

### The seafood consumer

Seafood consumption is markedly different for different demographics. 18-35 year olds eat the least seafood and are more likely to buy fresh seafood ready meals, or use frozen coated products.

Families eat more seafood than younger adults, but again added value products such as coated or ready to eat play an important role. Consumption of shellfish and natural fish begins to increase in this sector.

Those 35+ and ABC1 buy more natural fish and shellfish in both chilled and frozen, highlighting confidence in their cooking abilities. These groups are also more likely to visit a fishmonger.

Regular consumers eat seafood because they enjoy it, citing variety, taste, nutrition and ease of preparation as additional reasons. However, they still stick to species they know and cannot necessarily apply knowledge of how to cook one type of fish to another.

### Purchasing behaviour

People buy chilled and frozen seafood in very different ways. Chilled seafood is generally purchased either as part of a main or top up shop with a specific recipe and occasion in mind. However, shoppers are open to different species (although still confined to those in their repertoire) and will often choose what looks appealing at the fixture ie 'I need fresh fish to make fish pie on Thursday – the haddock looks good'.

Buying seafood from the frozen sector is generally part of a main shop. It isn't bought for a special occasion but is something the buyer always has on stand by. People are much more specific when buying frozen seafood, looking for their usual species and format, for example breaded cod or Omega-3 fish fingers.

Both sets of shoppers can be persuaded to move outside their comfort zone by specific offers, enticing recipes or new innovations. However, any move to expand their repertoire will need a lot of reassurance and guidance, such as specific cooking instructions, descriptions of taste and meal ideas.

### Consumers are cold fish

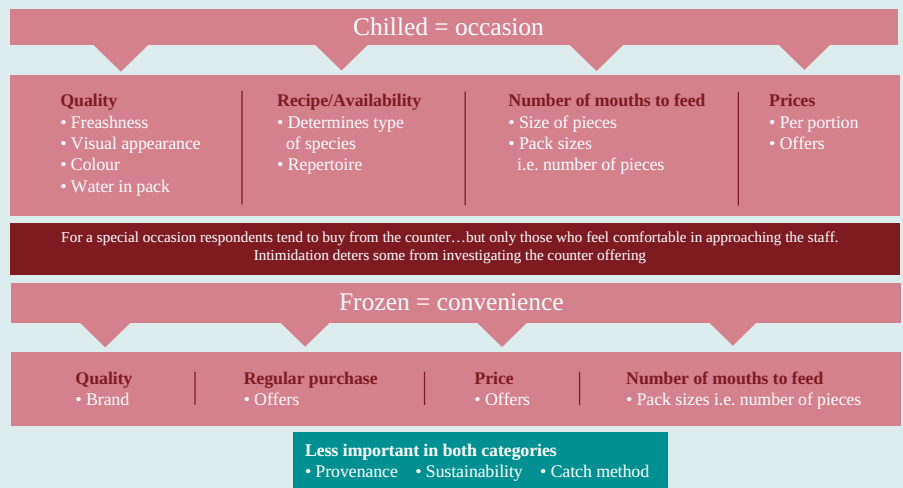
One of the clearest findings from the research was consumers' lack of emotional engagement with fish. It seems that because fish are not visible like poultry and livestock, it is very much a case of out of sight, out of mind.

Catch method is another very complex issue for consumers. 'Dolphin friendly tuna' is the only catch method mentioned spontaneously. Shoppers have very little knowledge of how fish is caught and struggle with concepts such as line caught. However, there is some awareness of discards prompted by television programmes such as BBC's 'Trawlermen'.

Only two people of the 50 who took part in the focus groups were aware of seasonal fishing, but neither could relate it to any particular species or seasons.

Our research shows that fresh and frozen fish each have different characteristics that appeal to shoppers. Frozen appears to be a consumer favourite for providing value for money, larger family size packs and a range of value-added products. People like the convenience of being able to take frozen fish and put it straight in the oven. Product choice in the frozen sector is influenced by packaging and branding; a well known brand drives perception of

## Decision criteria



When asked about provenance and local sourcing in relation to seafood, some consumers can talk about Scottish salmon but this is seen as more of a mark of quality than a provenance issue. Provenance is secondary to price – if a cheaper fillet from elsewhere is a similar quality to the locally sourced version, then shoppers will take the cheaper option.

Shoppers are more aware of the meaning of sustainability and relate it to stocks running out. Some even relate it to certain species, but it was very noticeable that this did not equate to them stopping buying the species they thought of as being at risk. For many people, it seems that sustainability is an abstract issue that won't hit home until they can no longer buy the species they are used to.

quality and on-pack photography reinforces these quality perceptions.

The chilled category wins on perceived quality, freshness and therefore taste. Consumers also see chilled products as offering greater nutritional benefits, again linked to perceptions of freshness. Chilled products are also easier to see, allowing consumers to make their own judgements on quality. Shoppers are often trying to balance a number of different requirements such as value for money, convenience and familiarity, while making purchasing decisions. They are generally scared of trying new species and need a lot of guidance to tempt them away from their traditional favourites. Our challenge is to overcome these barriers and convince consumers to pick up the fish.



# Battering *the competition*

*Giovanni Fionda of Atlantic Fast Food, winner of the Fish & Chip Shop of the Year competition, shares his thoughts on how standards are crucial to success.*

**S**tandards are extremely important to any business. I think you can often tell how people feel about their work by their attitude. Do they call it their job or is it a profession? Fish and chips are my profession and my love. I think my passion comes through in the end product. We run a business based on a traditional cooking style but served in a modern and professional manner.

#### **The customer experience**

The standard of the food is at the heart of my business, from the quality of the fish to the texture of the potatoes. Staff training is next on my list as they are the ones running the systems and more often than not the first point of customer contact. Sometimes we forget about the customers – what is their experience inside our shops? This is so important, as they pay our wages and are the reason we have a profession, so put yourself in their shoes. I organise a mystery shopper so that I get full and honest feedback. We also have various systems and shop policies designed to help the business run in a smooth professional manner and limit complaints.

#### **The Fish & Chip Shop of the Year competition**

Entering the Fish & Chip Shop of the Year competition was a natural progression for us in the journey towards quality. We also entered because of the free marketing and exposure we stood to gain. We were not too worried about the mystery shopper, as the shop runs in a weekly routine and I was confident we were operating all the systems to give the customers a great experience. However, I was especially interested in her negative feedback as we could use this to improve the business.

When it came to the final judging day in London, I had to give a presentation to the judging panel. I found that by just being myself and talking about Atlantic Fast Food and what made it tick (and not just the boring politics) I felt more comfortable and actually enjoyed it. I just hated waiting for the final decision!

Business has been moving at a frantic pace since winning the competition. Overnight, my sales have been driven up by an incredible amount and I have had to install an extra cooking range to deal with the surge in business. However, the real bonus is the marketing opportunity it has presented by putting us on the map. I can now market my business in a new and exciting way and enjoy its new star status.

So if you are thinking about entering the competition, my advice would be to do it. You have nothing to lose and much to gain!



Visit [www.fishandchipawards.com](http://www.fishandchipawards.com) to enter the revamped National Fish & Chip Awards 2011.