



SUCCESS

Strategic Use of Competitiveness towards Consolidating
the Economic Sustainability of the European Seafood Sector

Aquaculture ? Consumers' views from 8 European countries

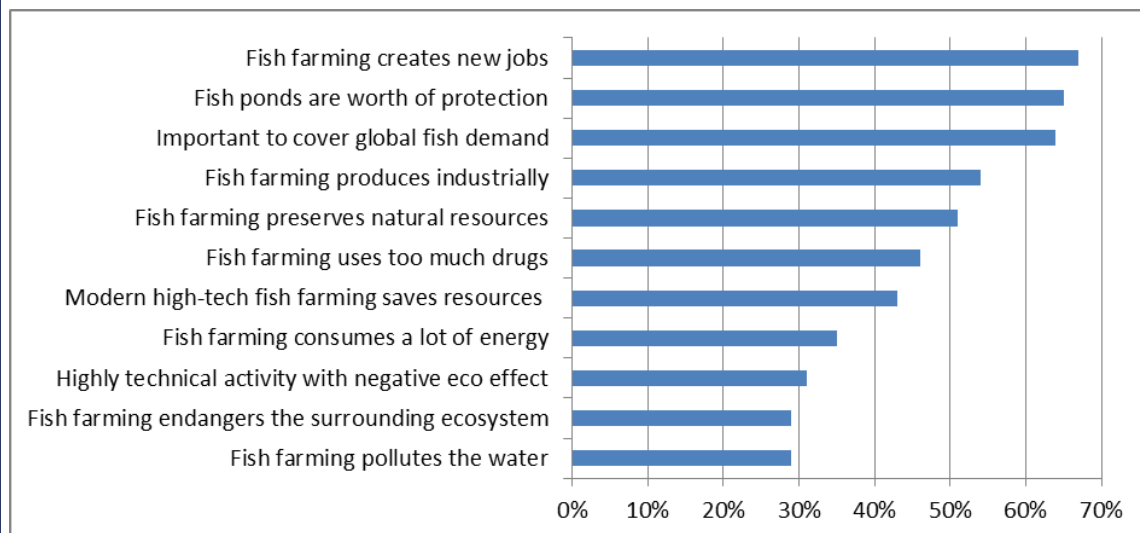
First results from the SUCCESS project

Since the 1970's the market relevance of aquaculture is increasing rapidly. The public interest in aquaculture is growing alongside its development. In this context, Yvonne Feucht and Katrin Zander from the Thuenen-Institute explored consumers' perception of aquaculture in more detail for the SUCCESS-project.

In March 2016 a survey was conducted with 4103 consumers in eight European countries (Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Spain and United Kingdom). An online panel run by a private market research agency was used for data sampling. Quotas were set for gender relations (two thirds women and one third men). With regard to age and regional distribution representativeness was required. All test persons had to be fish consumers.

The results of the survey reveal that in all study countries participants had a rather positive attitude towards aquaculture (see Fig.1). Aquaculture was foremost associated with the provision of jobs and as an important contribution to cover global fish demand.

Figure 1: Share of participants agreeing with the statements about aquaculture* (n=4103) (%)



Question: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

*Agreement/disagreement with the statements was measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 'totally disagree' to 7 'totally agree'. Scores of 5 or more were merged and classified as agreement with the statements.

More than half of the participants agreed that the consumption of farmed fish preserves natural resources. One reason for this might be that aquaculture is frequently believed to decrease pressure on wild fish stocks and in many European countries is seen as causing less environmental damage than fishing. In addition, 65% of the participants deemed fish ponds

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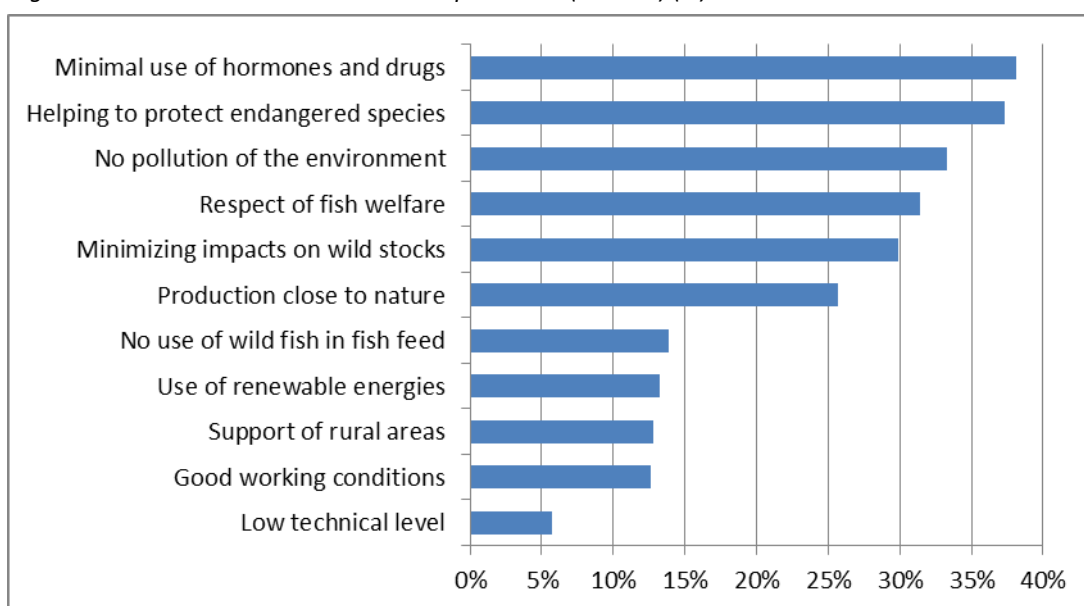
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worth of protection which might be due to the fact that ponds are appreciated as important elements of particular landscapes (e.g. the Aischgrund in Bavaria) and that fish farming is sometimes associated with the preservation of biodiversity through providing habitats for wildlife. Simultaneously, many participants believed that aquaculture produces industrially and uses too much drugs.

Regarding consumers' associations with **sustainable** aquaculture the results show that sustainable aquaculture was foremost associated with 'minimal use of hormones and drugs', 'helping to protect endangered species', 'no pollution of the environment' and 'respect of fish welfare' (see Fig.2). 'A low technical level', 'good working conditions for fish farmers' and the 'support of rural areas' were less important aspects. Thus, the environmental dimension of sustainability was more pronounced than the social and economic dimension. The high ranking of 'minimal use of hormones and drugs in sustainable aquaculture' stresses the high relevance of this issue for consumers. They expect a healthy product made from healthy animals. It became also obvious that animal welfare considerations and a near-natural production were perceived as facets of sustainability.

Figure 2: Associations with sustainable aquaculture (n=4103) (%)



Question: Please indicate the three most decisive elements of sustainable fish farming from your point of view.

Considering these results the aquaculture sector needs to ensure the production of safe and healthy food and should try to highlight its capacities in this respect. Also consumer research shows that animal welfare and environmental issues are of growing importance to many consumers in Europe. The sector needs to be aware of these growing interests and should consider them in the design of its production processes and communication efforts in order to maintain consumer acceptance and to secure markets in the long run.

READ ALSO

A review about Thuenen-Institute's participation to **Aquaculture Europe 2016**, with presentations by Yvonne Feucht and Katrin Zander about **Consumers interest in sustainable European fish** and **Consumers use of online information** : available on SUCCESS website under « Latest news » - <http://www.success-h2020.eu/latest-news/>

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