SEAFOODplus: objectives, outputs, progress since the completion of the project

SEAFOODplus was in the period 2004-2008 an integrated research project supported by the EU with a total budget of 26 million euro. The project engaged about 200 researchers collaborating within six major research areas covering human nutrition, consumer behaviour, seafood safety, product quality, aquaculture and traceability. Integrating research from so many disciplines created many new solutions to problems observed within seafood production and marketing. As time is limited in this presentation only a few examples of the most interesting results will be highlighted. Among the three projects within the human nutrition area one project pointed toward new information indicating that fish protein has been overlooked as a key factor for human nutrition. When male individuals received a hypocaloric diet for weight reduction, the weight loss was significantly higher when the diet contained fish, and the effect continued after the test period of eight weeks. A survey among close to 5,000 consumers in five European countries showed that seafood safety is ranked as the most important, and consumers trusted information given my medical doctors most. This would indicate that healthcare personnel should be used for communicating seafood and health messages to consumers. It has been considered safe to avoid histamine poisoning from scombroid fishes if the temperature is kept well below 10oC throughout storage. However, several cases of poisoning have been observed in spite of low temperature storage. In one of the SEAFOODplus projects in the safety area a new bacterium was discovered that was able to decarboxylate histidine even when the fish was stored in ice. New methods to avoid this were developed within the project. A new seafood product was developed containing plant fibres with antioxidants, thus adding two important effects to the product; seafood with fibres and the lipids protected with antioxidants. The delivery of fish from aquaculture with consistent high nutritional value can be secured through feed formulations. In the SEAFOODplus project it has been shown how fish can be used for delivering high amounts of essential nutrients, e.g. selenium, through optimal feed formulations, thus using fish as a carrier of important nutrients in the human diet. Traceability was a project area cutting across all the other areas within the SEAFOODplus project. New methods for implementing full traceability in the seafood chain was introduced and the technical equipment needed tested. Following the completion of the SEAFOODplus project, which happened within the planned time frame, a wish to continue the collaboration was expressed by several partners. Thus, a continuation has been implemented as a research platform carrying the same ‘brand’ used in the project period, but the new platform is open to new partners not having participated in the EU project. More than 30 members have already signed up. The platform arranges workshops and events for continued support from the EU. Information for membership can be found at www.seafoodplus.org.

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