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# Fish News

## Convenience crucial to successful product innovation

By introducing new products, the Dutch fish processing companies meet the wishes from the market. For a successful launch of new products, the convenience factor is prerequisite.

For Dutch fish processing businesses, product innovation is a 'must'. Fish landings are under pressure. "We're not only specialists of fish, but above all entrepreneurs. If we can't get more growth by increasing volumes, we'll have to look for alternatives," according to a fish supplier. Another firm adds: "We depend on the landings for our wet fish.



This results in major price fluctuations. These fluctuations have a direct effect on unprocessed fish products. If you process fish, using other, more fixed priced products, you can absorb these fluctuations more easily." In addition, the fish businesses can

extend their sales to new target groups, for instance to younger people who no longer prepare fish in the traditional way.

### Heating-up culture

Knowledge on how to prepare food is dwindling. In addition, consumers are buying less whole fish. They also spend less time preparing their food. "A new heating-up culture is emerging," says a fish seller. As a consequence, convenience products are the first priority where product innovation is concerned. Prerequisite to any new fish product is that it can be served within ten minutes.

Consumers are aware of the fact that fish is good for one's health. But fish is not to everyone's taste. That is why fish processing companies combine fish with other products such as vegetables, cold cuts or pasta. "For this group of consumers the new product should not be too fishlike," says one supplier.



*Freshness from Holland*

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### Healthy snacks

Another development is eating healthy and dietary sound snacks. Very popular at this moment are goujons: thin strips of fish in crusty batter or the salmon shoarma, a variation on a well known meat product.

By offering fish in other ways than the traditional way alone, suppliers can respond to new flavour profiles. Mediterranean flavours, for instance, have become very popular in the North of Europe in recent years.

England is by far the most trend-setting nation where product innovation is concerned. Dutch fish companies try to convert these trends to the demands of the Dutch and French markets. The German market is slightly more conservative with regard to fresh fish products. Lately, an increased interest for ready-made dishes, such as filets of fish

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in various sauces or fish prepared for stir frying, can be noticed in Spain as well.

### Investing

Dutch companies invest much time and money in the development of new fish products. Some have their own department, dedicated to product innovation alone.

Here, they further explore original ideas, follow trends or try to meet consumer's wishes. "Only one out of ten propositions is viable. Before a new product is introduced on the market, it is extensively tested together with the client. Not all new products prove to be successful. More often than not, a successful product turns out to be a variation on an existing theme. Most of the time innovation is a matter of very simple things," says one of the firms. ■

## Holland among the leaders in food safety

Holland is in the forefront where matters of food safety are concerned, both in the area of compliance with legislation and of certification. Holland is the country with the greatest amount of company certifications, is the opinion of Rien Buitink, director of the GKD (Joint Quality Services). "Holland is a trading nation. What counts is what the customer demands and the customer demands certification."

By tradition, fish processing firms are principally concerned with their trade. Their main task is the buying, processing and selling of fish. Quality management is an entirely different occupation. Fish firms who do not have much expertise in the field of quality management may seek the aid of, for instance, the GKD. The GKD has 60 fish processing firms and 200 retailers among their clients. This extensive clientele is a clear illustration of the level of quality management in Dutch fish processing firms.



In the Netherlands, compliance with European legislation regarding food safety is scrupulously monitored. This is not surprising. Holland is a real distribution country. Large quantities of foodstuffs are imported and exported. Moreover, some part of those products is first processed in the Netherlands before being exported. That is why Dutch companies pay extra attention to quality checks and quality systems. Many of them have one or more certifications, such as ISO, HACCP or BRC.

### Increasing number of systems

Buitink assesses that the number of quality management systems is increasing. It started with ISO. This system provided buyers with information on their supplier's operational processes. Then came HACCP. In this system all critical issues within a company were identified, described and checked, with the objective to obtain a safe end product. BRC goes one step further. In fact, it merges premises requirements, ISO and HACCP all into one. The most significant addition to HACCP is the introduction of management instruments. With this, BRC offers the buyer a guarantee that his supplier has all his operational processes well in hand, so that he will be able to meet his commitments.

When introducing quality management systems, companies take their clients' requirements into consideration. As a result, some companies work with multiple systems at the same time.

### Impact of quality management system

In order to implement a quality management system, the system requirements must be translated to the daily practice on the work floor. This has a great impact on operational processes, for employees have a major

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## Editorial

### A fish a day, keeps the doctor away

For companies it is of vital importance to respond to the wishes of consumers. However, this is getting more difficult all the time, as consumers are becoming increasingly more demanding.



A major wish of consumers is convenience, because they have increasingly less time for preparing a meal. A clear shift towards convenience products is apparent.

But why don't we respond more patently to the wish of every consumer to lead a more healthy life? By nature, fish is a healthy and dietary sound product. Oily species of fish are very healthy to eat because of the omega-3 fatty acids they contain, fatty substances which have very favourable effects. This value, which is added to fish products by nature, is often neglected. Which is strange. Many a sector would be utterly grateful to have such a first-rate starting point.

International research into the relationship between health and the consumption of fish strengthens our view in this matter. In the Netherlands, the government even advises people to eat fish once or twice a week. Obviously, we should take care not to present fish as a medicine.

Together we should be aware of what a wonderful product we are selling and shout our message loud and clear: fish is not only extremely tasty, it is also extremely healthy!

Tilly Sintnicolaas  
director

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influence on the product's quality. Take, for instance, hygiene. Therefore, much attention is paid to personal hygiene and hygiene in the work area. Certification bears its impact on all departments within a company.

To subsequently maintain the quality management systems, regular checks are necessary. These checks supply important information about the production process and about the products.

### Pro-activity

Despite the considerable impact the introduction of a quality management system has on production processes, Rien Buitink can see a gradual change of attitude with Dutch fish processing companies. "In the past, these systems were primarily introduced at the request of a client. Now we can see that leading businesses no longer wait for such a demand from the market, but that they act in advance." ■



*Freshness  
from  
Holland*

## Tuna is a modern product

**Until recently, fresh tuna was primarily eaten in Mediterranean countries. In the northern countries of Europe, tuna was mostly known in its tinned variety. Now we can see a change. The great versatility of fresh tuna is appreciated in countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany as well. The interest for this species of fish is growing.**

Tuna can be found in all the seas between 40°N and 40°S. They are fast swimmers, able to travel over great distances. Research has shown, that they cross the ocean from the coast of Mexico to Japan and from Florida to the Bay of Biscay. During the day, tuna swim in the deep waters, at night they emerge to the surface. Tuna fish are real predators. Their primary food source is fish that live in shoals.

### Agreements on quality

The Netherlands import tuna from Central America, Asia and for some part from Africa. The trade of deep frozen or wet tuna is subject to certain quality requirements.



### Nutritious values

Per 100 grams fresh product:

Fat	4,9	grams
1,3 grams of which omega-3 fatty acids		
Protein	24,3	grams
Water	74	grams
Carbon hydrates	0	grams
Sodium	100	mg
Calcium	20	mg
Iron	1,0	mg
Vitamins:	retinol	0,01 mg
	B1	0,05 mg
	B2	0,25 mg
	C	2,00 mg



Certification is one way of assessing and checking the various qualities. However, the aimed quality is best achieved by buying the major part of a local factory's production. Buying large quantities of tuna puts the Dutch traders in a position to be able to make specific agreements with the local supplying companies with regard to the desired quality of the products and the production process. Consequently, tuna is often locally processed. Only sporadically, semi-manufactured products are processed in Europe.

### Deep frozen or wet

There are various types of tuna. To the European market, the albacore tuna and the yellow fin tuna are especially important. The albacore tuna is mostly processed into preserved products in tins and jars. The yellow fin tuna is sold deep frozen or wet.

The increasing popularity of tuna can be well explained. The northern European

countries traditionally have a preference for meat. Where it comes to taste and texture, but also in respect of preparation, tuna resembles veal. Thanks to modern proces-

sing and preservation techniques and because of swift transportation tuna can nowadays be offered in many varieties. In this way, tuna responds to changing dietary patterns.

### Carpaccio

Wet tuna is offered in different varieties, such as steaks and fillets. Superior quality tuna is often eaten raw in sashimi. Or it is sliced very thinly and offered as carpaccio. Especially for children, tuna nuggets and tuna hamburgers are available.

The latest trend is tuna offered in very small cubes to be used, for instance, in salads.

In Mediterranean countries tuna is mostly grilled on the barbecue. But this fish is equally suitable for frying, steaming, braising or smoking. In addition to smoked salmon, the shops now offer smoked tuna as well. ■

# Fish, an ocean of health

Consumers should eat fish once or twice a week in order to diminish the risk of cardiovascular diseases. Oily fish in particular, like mackerel, herring, eel, salmon and halibut are good for the heart and the arteries.



infarct. Eating fish once or twice a week is already enough to provide the required amount.

## Oily fish good for children

Research at the University of Maastricht confirms that poly-unsaturated fats stimulate the development of the brain of small children and improve their eyesight, because these fatty acids play an important role in the formation of the brain tissue and the retina of the unborn child. The human body cannot synthesize these fatty acids itself, but depends on dietary intake. Children take these poly-unsaturated fatty acids in via the placenta and through their mother's milk. In other words, eating oily fish during and just after pregnancy might stimulate the development of small children.

The Dutch Fish Marketing Board provides extensive information on the wholesome qualities of fish. Would you like to know more? Please let us know. You will find our address in the colophon. ■

## Reduction fatal cardiovascular conditions

Fish, especially oily fish, contains omega-3 fatty acids. These unsaturated fatty acids have a beneficial effect on the heart and the arteries. Scientific research has shown that as little as 0,2 grams of omega-3 fatty acids a day can reduce fatal cardiovascular conditions by 30 per cent. In addition, the omega-3 fatty acids increase the lifespan of people who already suffered a cardiac

## Health effects of omega-3 fatty acids

Fish reduces the chance of heart and vascular diseases.

Eating fish regularly could reduce the risk of dementia.

Eating fish reduces the chance of diabetes mellitus.



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## Colophon

Fish News is a publication of the Dutch Fish Marketing Board in Rijswijk, the Netherlands. The Dutch Fish Marketing Board is the promotional body for the entire Dutch fishing sector.

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## Plaice campaign in Italy

Italy is the largest buyer of Dutch plaice. The Dutch share in the Italian market for plaice products is ninety per cent. Virtually all Italian supermarkets include deep frozen filets of plaice in their product range. In the period between October and November 2003, the Dutch Fish Marketing Board will start a promotional campaign in Italy, in order to make the Italian consumer even more aware of Dutch plaice. The Dutch Fish Marketing Board will focus its promotional plans on households with children under the age of 13. They form the largest group of plaice buyers in Italy. ■

