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# Fish News

## Fish on the menu

The Dutch Fish Marketing Board recently organised a national gathering under the name 'Fish on the Menu'. Its objective was to inform guests and media about Dutch initiatives to put more fish on the menu. Fish is healthy, easy to prepare and produced in a sustainable manner. All the more reason to eat fish more often.

In comparison to many other European countries, the Dutch surprisingly do not eat a lot of fish. The Italians and Spanish, for example, eat twice as much fish as Dutch people do. And that, while the Netherlands has its own fishing fleet which brings in a wide range of delicious and healthy fish.

### Convenience

Research shows that the Dutch consider preparing fish a troublesome task. So the

Dutch fish manufacturers are investing in improving the ease-of-use of fish products. Fish is increasingly being offered in the form of fresh or frozen convenience products, for ready-to-eat meals.

### Environment-friendly

Dutch fisheries are undertaking various initiatives to improve the quality and sustainability of their products. Dutch herring fishermen, for example, are trying to win the

internationally recognised MSC certificate. Dutch flat fishermen are investing in new, environment-friendly fishing techniques, such as the pulse trawl, whereby small electrical shocks are used to startle the flatfish. This form of fishing requires less fuel and has less impact on the seabed, as well as less by-catches. It is also less damaging to the fish when brought on board.

### Fish once or twice a week

Food experts are unanimous in their advice: Eat fish twice a week! Fish is healthy and full of valuable nutrients such as Omega-3 fatty acids. Research has shown that regular consumption of fish causes a considerable reduction in deaths from cardiovascular disease. Fatty fish such as mackerel, eel or herring contain a lot of good fatty acids.

Through events like 'Fish on the Menu' the Dutch Fish Marketing Board gives information on innovations in the Dutch fishing sector which result in tasty, healthy and sustainably produced fish products. All the more reason to put fish on the daily menu.

# Freshness from Holland

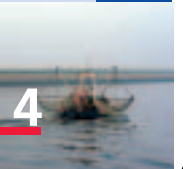
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# Innovation in Dutch aquaculture

**Dutch aquaculture is a young and rapidly developing sector. The early 1990s saw fish farmers focusing on production increases, while today they are paying ever more attention to animal health, food safety, traceability and the introduction of new species.**

Today the Netherlands has about one hundred fish farmers, of whom 50 percent specialize in the famous Dutch eel. One-third breeds freshwater catfish. Others are introducing new species including tilapia, sole, turbot, pike perch and barramundi (Asian bass). Crustacea and shellfish too are experiencing new developments.

## Shellfish

The Netherlands has long been a major supplier of shellfish such as blue mussels and cockles. But to reduce dependence merely on what nature has to offer, companies are studying the production of seed mussels and mussel larvae.



Other experiments are breeding cockles, from hatching to end product. Dutch companies have also started sustainable breeding of both salt-water and freshwater shrimps combining the cultivation of algae that should serve as shrimp food.

## Code of conduct

Dutch fish farmers are constantly seeking to improve their production processes to better meet their customers' demands. Besides quality, flavour, size and price, socially sound production methods are also receiving careful attention. For this Dutch fish farmers have

united in setting up a code of conduct. This is partly based on the aquaculture code of conduct of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the European Federation for Fish Farmers (FEAP). It foresees responsible development of healthy aquaculture in the Netherlands. The fish farmers involved have made agreements with regard to the delivery of a good product, produced in accordance with proper standards, for instance within the scope of animal health, the environment and safety of food.

## Fewer medicines

According to recent research carried out by the national Dutch Food and Commodities Authority Dutch fish farmers are using less medication than they used to. Research undertaken on 85 samples taken from fish farms, recreation ponds and trade companies confirmed this.

According to one fish farmer fewer medicines are used partly because of the increasing knowledge of fish diseases. After all, prevention is better than cure.



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## Fish consumption rising sustainably



At a recent event in the Scheveningen fish auction the Dutch fish sector announced its plans for the future. A wide coalition of companies and representative

organisations are seeking to raise the presence of fish on next years' menus.

The Netherlands has its own fishing fleet and fish processing industry. Nevertheless, fish consumption remains low compared to other European countries. Fish is a varied and delicious product. And scientists agree that regular fish consumption contributes to good health. Reason enough to eat more fish! However, is it actually available? To continue to ensure sufficient fish supplies in the future, the Dutch fish sector is taking various initiatives to raise sustainable fish production.

For instance, Dutch fishermen are investing in a new fishing technique called the pulskor. This technique not only spares nature and the environment, it also uses less fuel. It is a significant development in a time in which fuel costs are continuing to rise. Another example is the Dutch shrimp and herring fishermen obtaining the MSC label. This eco-label is known across the world as an independent demonstration of sustainable fishing.

Dutch shrimp traders are making clear-cut agreements with tropical shrimp breeders and OXFAM for a more sustainable production system of these large shrimps, which continue to rise in popularity among European consumers.

Dutch aquaculture too is on the move. The shellfish sector is seeking to become less dependent of nature by breeding its own mussel hatchlings. And sustainable cultivation of new species in the Netherlands, including tilapia and barramundi, are proving a welcome supplement to the selection.

In short, enough reason to offer more fish, more often, on the menu.

Tilly Sintnicolaas  
Managing Director

# Mackerel

## Beautiful fish - undervalued for far too long

According to Dutch traders mackerel is one of the most beautiful, but also one of the most underestimated fish. Mackerel is a good-looking, nutritious and delicious fish. In the past easily available and cheap, today on its way to becoming less common and relatively expensive.

In deliberation with the Norwegians the European fisheries board has decided to reduce the TAC (Total Allowable Catch) for mackerel by 23 percent in 2005.

### Mackerel Western waters:

TAC 2004	545,500 tons
TAC 2005	420,000 tons

Mackerel is an essential catch to Dutch deep-freeze trawlers that return this catch to port deep-frozen. Supply is both regional and seasonal. Norwegian fishermen catch mackerel in the Norwegian zone in August, a period in which it has no less than 30 percent fat. This fat fish is interesting especially to the Japanese and Russian market. To Dutch fish processors the fat fish is less important as their smoke-houses require less fat mackerel. This fish is caught no earlier than in January. By then the mackerel from Norwegian waters has reached the region surrounding the Shetland Islands and Ireland, reaching areas in which Dutch deep-freeze trawlers are allowed to fish. During this period the mackerel's fat has halved to around 16 percent, a mackerel that lends itself perfectly to Dutch smokehouses. Later in the season the fat percentage drops further to 10 percent. This 'thin' mackerel is more attractive to the fresh food market and the canning industry. The Dutch fish for mackerel until the quota is exhausted, usually from January to April.

### Export

Some of the mackerel supplied by Dutch deep-freeze trawlers is destined for the national market. In the Netherlands mackerel is



steamed, smoked or seasoned whole or as fillets. Some of the smoked fish is also shipped to Belgium and Germany.

But the majority of the mackerel supplied is exported throughout the world. The main purchasers are Poland, Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States followed by Korea and China. Over the past years large mackerel was shipped mainly to Russia and Ukraine. These countries prefer mackerel of at least 400 grams individual weight. East Europe has always seen mackerel as an important product. Until recently East European countries would catch the fish themselves, but because they no longer have the fishing rights for mackerel they depend on imports, such as those from the Dutch.

### Deep-frozen

Although the Dutch catch mackerel only during a short period of the year, the fish is a significant trading product. Onboard Dutch deep-freeze trawlers mackerel is frozen quickly to protect its quality. This allows Dutch traders to deliver a good product at a reasonable price. As mackerel is processed on large-scale, offering the fish deep-frozen is a matter of course.

Despite catch restrictions mackerel is still relatively commonly available. The price to be paid, however, cannot be afforded by anyone. Mackerel is becoming an expensive product, a development to which Dutch traders react soberly. "Mackerel is a natural product. We must wait for better times, which will come I'm sure," says one of them. Traders expect mackerel supply to recover as a result of which the catch rights will increase and prices will stabilise. They are optimistic about the future of mackerel. "We deliver a good product for a good price. And its uses are diverse. Mackerel will remain profitable to our national market and the international trade."



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## Product information

Mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*) is a beautiful fish. The pelagic species has a blue-green back and a silvery white belly, blue-black stripes and a deeply indented tail fin. The fish usually reaches 35 to 50 centimeters in length.



The mackerel is firm and fat, yet simultaneously juicy and soft. A fresh mackerel has a fresh smell, like the sea. It is a very popular fish, with a highly appreciated flavour and several ways to prepare. Although hot-smoked mackerel is a Dutch delicacy, the fish is usually sold whole and deep-frozen to foreign countries.

Mackerel is offered in the following categories:

- 200 – 400 grams
- 300 – 500 grams
- 400 – 600 grams
- > 600 grams

This type is available throughout the year.

### Nutritional values

per 100 gram

fat	12 grams
protein	18 grams
kJ	818
kCal	195

## Dutch traders seek sustainable production of tropical shrimp

**Tropical shrimp are increasingly on offer to European consumers. Since the 1980s the breeding of these large shrimp has increased considerably.**



Tropical shrimp are today bred on a large scale for export. Whereas the early eighties saw no less than 80 percent of them caught in the wild, by the year 2000 this percentage had dropped to 25 percent. The rest of the harvest is bred intensively.

The enormous growth in the production of tropical shrimp affects local ecologies and the local natural balance as well as socio-economic development of local communities. Dutch importers and processors of tropical shrimp are thus investing best efforts to promote sustainable production without harm to nature and the environment. Examples include clear agreements with breeders on their responsible production and processing. In production areas Dutch shrimp traders have appointed staff to make sure breeders observe the agreements made.

In addition to this, Dutch importers have signed an agreement with socially responsible organisations such as OXFAM Netherlands. These cover issues such as how to tackle the ecological and socio-economic problems of shrimp production. For instance agreements have been made to spare vulnerable coastal mangrove forests.



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Breeders must also observe 'Good Aquaculture Practices' and comply with minimal legal demands in terms of staff working conditions and the environment. Importers and traders will encourage transparency and traceability along the full production and distribution chain. In this way Dutch shrimp traders hope to contribute actively to sustainable production of tropical shrimp.

## Eco-label for North Sea shrimp

**By the end of 2007 environmental organisations and the Dutch shrimp sector are seeking to provide MSC labeled shrimps (*crangon crangon*) from the Waddenzee and the North Sea.**

**This would undoubtedly add to the delicious and healthy North Sea shrimp a nature and environment-friendly character.**

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is a non-profit organisation encouraging sustainable fishing by allocating the eco-label to organisations responding. It is an independent label acknowledged throughout the world. To qualify for certification, shrimpers must comply with several criteria. These include avoiding overfishing and damage to the environment, reducing unnecessary extra amounts of fish caught and managing shrimp fishery reserves wisely.

Dutch shrimpers are proud of their environment-friendly fishing methods.

Past research has shown that North Sea

shrimp fisheries have a good chance of receiving the eco-label. Though the way in which the current shrimp fishing methods in the North Sea and the Waddenzee is evaluated remains to be seen. MSC might demand improvements such as obligatory sieve netting, attention to fuel consumption and CFC in the cold stores onboard.

Should the North Sea shrimp indeed receive the MSC certificate, it will become Europe's first shrimp fishery holding the eco-label.

Dutch shrimp traders too are interested in the eco-label for the North Sea shrimp. Clients are setting ever higher demands on sustainability. The MSC label on North Sea shrimp fishing will allow companies to demonstrate that the North Sea shrimp is a product to be trusted. This will contribute to a positive image of shrimps and the long-term viability of the sector.



## Colophon

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Dutch Fish  Marketing Board

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