



Multi-actor design of low-waste food value chains through the demonstration of innovative solutions to reduce food loss and waste

LOWINFOOD

PRACTICE ABSTRACT No: 18

We needed to talk about fish

A significant proportion of the fish that ends up in the nets does not find its way onto our plates. Although the figures for how high this proportion should be estimated vary considerably in the scientific literature, according to some estimates every second fish caught is not ultimately consumed by humans. There are no current and exact figures on what proportion of fish is lost in the German market for human consumption.

In the LOWINFOOD project, we did not aim to collect more precise data for the fish value chain in Germany. Rather, we wanted to talk to stakeholders, and bring these people, companies and organizations into conversation with each other - from fishing to processing and refinement, wholesale and logistics to retail and catering; participants from science as well as civil society and government institutions also took part. The goal was to better understand where the losses are particularly high and which strategies and measures could lead to an improvement in the situation.

The stakeholder dialogue was conducted as two formats: 1. Interviews in which experts presented their views on problems and possible solutions in the field of fish in detail. And 2. Workshops in which the interviewees and other experts were able to discuss with each other. The participants of the stakeholder workshop emphasise that relatively small amounts of waste are generated in the steps of the value chain that is important for Germany (especially processing, transport, wholesale and retail trade and catering). This is mainly justified by increased fish prices, meaning no company has an interest in unnecessary losses. If losses do occur, this is often due to the lack of (skilled) workers. This shortage should be combated through more attractive working conditions and policy measures. In the upstream and downstream stages of the value chain (upstream: fishing, mostly by foreign fleets and often in developing countries; downstream: consumption in private households) large amounts of waste are generated. It is up to companies and politics to influence these stages, for example through better coordination with fisheries in the Global South and support for the introduction of sustainability labels such as MSC; and also through better nutrition education that enables people to use the valuable resource of fish appropriately and as completely as possible.

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Additional information

Seafood products are highly valuable yet perishable. Therefore, efficient value chain coordination is key to ensuring that they are allocated to the most profitable among potential uses. Coordination becomes even more critical when adding value to surplus products like unwanted catch, or by-products from processing. While innovators around the world are exploring alternative uses such as extraction of high-value nutrients from by-products, and some countries have achieved higher percent use of their catch, the scope for creating additional value is still significant.

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ABOUT LOWINFOOD

The LOWINFOOD project, launched in 2020 and coordinated by the University of Tuscia, Italy, is working to deploy and improve a set of 14 innovative solutions to the food waste problem, by demonstrating their effectiveness and market potential. The core activities of the project are all focused on the evaluation of the efficacy of these innovations in reducing food losses and waste, in terms of the amount of food waste avoided as well as their environmental and socio-economic impact.

CONSORTIUM



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Gesprächsthema Fisch

Ein erheblicher Teil des Fisches, der in den Netzen landet, findet nicht den Weg auf unsere Teller, wobei die Angaben, wie hoch dieser Anteil einzuschätzen ist, in der wissenschaftlichen Literatur deutlich auseinandergehen, bis hin zur Schätzung, dass jeder zweite gefangene Fisch am Ende nicht von Menschen verzehrt wird. Aktuelle und exakte Zahlen, welcher Anteil des Fisches im deutschen Markt für den menschlichen Verzehr verloren geht, gibt es nicht.

Im LOWINFOOD-Projekt haben wir nicht darauf abgezielt, genauere Daten für die Wertschöpfungskette Fisch in Deutschland zu erheben. Vielmehr wollten wir mit Stakeholdern, also Anspruchsgruppen oder Interessengruppen, ins Gespräch kommen und diese Personen, Unternehmen und Organisationen miteinander ins Gespräch bringen – von der Fischerei über die Verarbeitung und Veredelung, Großhandel und Logistik bis zu Einzelhandel und Gastronomie; dazu kamen Teilnehmende aus der Wissenschaft sowie zivilgesellschaftlichen und staatlichen Institutionen. Ziel war, besser zu verstehen, an welchen Stellen besonders viele Verluste entstehen, und welche Strategien und Maßnahmen zu einer Verbesserung der Lage führen könnten.

Der Stakeholderdialog stützte sich vor allem auf zwei Formate: 1. Interviews, in denen Expertinnen und Experten ausführlich ihre Sicht auf Probleme und Lösungsmöglichkeiten im Themenfeld Fisch darstellen konnten. Und 2. Workshops, in die interviewten Personen sowie weitere Expertinnen und Experten miteinander diskutieren konnten. Die Teilnehmenden am Stakeholderworkshop betonen, dass in dem Bereich der Wertschöpfungskette, der für Deutschland besonders wichtig ist (vor allem Verarbeitung, Transport, Groß- und Einzelhandel und Gastronomie) relativ geringe Abfallmengen anfallen. Dies wird vor allem damit begründet, dass Fisch sehr teuer geworden ist und daher kein Unternehmen ein Interesse an unnötigen Verlusten hat. Wenn es doch zu Verlusten kommt, hat das oft mit dem Fach- und Arbeitskräftemangel zu tun, der durch attraktivere Arbeitsbedingungen und politische Maßnahmen bekämpft werden sollte. In den vor- und nachgelagerten Stufen der Wertschöpfungskette (vorgelagert: Fischerei, meist von ausländischen Flotten und oft in Entwicklungsländern; nachgelagert: Konsum in den Privathaushalten) hingegen fallen großen Abfallmengen an. Hier gilt es für Unternehmen und Politik, Einfluss auf diese Stufen zu nehmen, beispielsweise durch eine bessere Koordination mit der Fischerei im Globalen Süden und der Unterstützung bei der Einführung von Nachhaltigkeitssiegeln wie MSC; zudem durch eine bessere Ernährungsbildung, die Menschen dazu befähigt, die wertvolle Ressource Fisch angemessen und möglichst vollständig zu verwerten.

This Practice abstract reflects only the author's view. The LOWINFOOD project is not responsible for any use that might be made of the information it contains.



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