Survey Suggests Successful Claims For Seabream Marketing

The concept of “quality fish” at households in developed countries includes ease of handling, storage and cooking. The typical profile of the consumers who purchased at the markets was a woman older than 50 years who owned a home and had a primary or equivalent degree of education. Although the increasing segment of young professionals and parents in the 30- to 45-year-old range living in the surrounding areas has been sought by authorities’ promotional efforts, the group represents less than 25% of the total number of purchasers. Promotion at the markets, which are considered providers of the best quality in fresh seafood, relies on sellers providing customers both ample quantity and quality. Brands and associated claims other than local sourcing are not frequent at traditional fresh fish stores. It is assumed that personal relationships among retailers and purchasers encourage trust, and customers are not so aware or concerned with seafood safety or sustainability. On the other hand, studies performed for the Spanish Ministry of Fisheries revealed that customers of traditional fish markets held the most unfavorable attitudes towards aquaculture species. With these market conditions, a discrete choice experiment was conducted presenting claims for safety, health benefits and sustainability in different combinations for wild and farmed seabream. The main conclusions (Table 2) pointed to a strong preference for wild domestic seabream. Even so, the lower utility derived from farmed and imported products can be compensated with lower comparative prices. Country of origin was the second most important attribute for participants. The probability of choosing farmed seabream and hence willingness to pay was higher for a domestic than an imported product. Sustainability claims were more effective than safety claims in increasing the probability of choosing a seabream and had a higher marginal willingness to pay. Health benefits exerted slightly smaller effects on choice and willingness to pay than sustainability exerted.

Price was the most important driver to choose seabream. The lower production cost of farmed seabream was its main advantage over wild fish. But the price differential between both harvesting methods could be offset by greater emphasis on local production, sustainability, health benefits and safety. Local origin has a strong competitive advantage for producers.

Market Strategies A marketing strategy focused on the local market may obtain a bigger return than one focused on overseas markets. Accurate labeling that clearly identifies the origin of the product would benefit local producers in getting higher prices than for imported species. Sustainability can also include special preparations for specific market segments like small children, elderly people and those with unique dietary requirements.

Field Survey The authors recently conducted an experiment in a traditional fish market in northern Spain with 33 fresh fish retail stores where seabream is a common species offered to consumers. Traditional fish markets account for around 30% of total Spanish fish purchases, a share which increases in the fresh fish market.

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