

## **IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND PRICE OF FISH BY SEPARATE HANDLING AT SEA AND IN THE FISH AUCTION**

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The project aimed to improve the quality of wild fish landed in the auction and to demonstrate that quality did indeed pay. This was realized by special handling of the fish on board and separate sorting, quality control and sale in the fish auction.

Special small boxes were developed to store the fish caught during the last two fishing days. This reduced the pressure on the fish and improved the visibility for the quality control. Particular attention was paid to Good Manufacturing Practises (GMP), such as correct gutting, washing and icing.

Twelve fish species were selected for the project: brill, turbot, sole, lemon sole, sea bass, monkfish, tub gurnard, red gurnard, ray, hake, megrim and John Dory. Some of these species are subject to quota regulation, some not, and special attention was given for upgrading the latter fish species.

The success of the project is discussed with respect to the quality of fish landed by vessels participating in the project and the prices paid for higher quality fish.

The landings of E-quality sole, brill, turbot, lemon sole, sea bass and monkfish were high during the project. Around 15% of the landings of tub gurnard, red gurnard and ray were E-quality. Hake, megrim and John Dory were rarely landed as E-quality. In comparison to the landings of E-quality fish before the start of the project, a major increase could be noted.

The price for E-quality fish was in many cases substantially higher than for A-quality fish. Especially the expensive species noted an important price difference. In some cases, the price difference was negligible or even negative. This was the case for megrim and hake. This might be due to the long duration of the auction or to the supply surpassing the demand, what can annihilate the positive price effect of quality.

To conclude, the quality of the landed fish improved considerably thanks to small adaptations in logistics and handling. In addition, E-quality fish obtained better average prices than A-quality fish. This made the extra effort of GMP at sea very profitable.

### References

Bekaert K., S. Derveaux and P. Maryssael. 2008. Eindverslag project 'ontolovis'. Ontwikkeling en toepassing van logistiek met toegevoegde waarde in de viskwaliteitsintegratie. 22p.