

Seafood Baskets

FLAG: Etang de Thau et sa bande côtière

France

Project overview

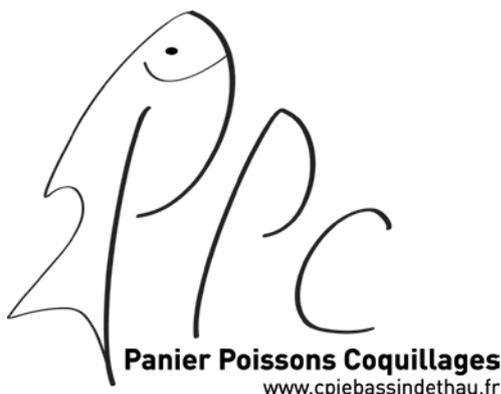
Connecting local fishermen and aquaculture producers with consumers through a seafood basket scheme helped increase the profile and consumption of local fish, oysters and other seafood in the area.



Although situated in a region with a strong fisheries heritage, inhabitants of the villages around the Thau lagoon area have for a long time experienced difficulties in buying local seafood. With no local fishmongers, customers needed to find individual producers willing to sell their products or depended upon larger stores. To develop a supply of local and seasonal seafood, a local environmental association used Axis 4 to develop a seafood basket distribution scheme.

Starting from a single direct sales initiative, it evolved into a distribution network active in four villages, backed up by a website enabling customers to register for the scheme, place orders and select their pick-up point. Axis 4 was instrumental in developing a communication strategy, covering feasibility studies on pick-up points & times of delivery, and ensuring connectivity with local events to generate visibility. The project also helped to train a group of “ambassador” customers, acquiring skills to manage and animate the pick-up spots and update the website weekly with product availabilities in partnership with producers.

Now combining seafood with bread, cheese and other delicacies of local producers, the basket scheme became a true socialising tool for the area. Enabling meet-and-greets and informal exchanges between customers and professionals around their products, the scheme is now diversifying its offer towards “cultural” local products connected with fisheries heritage such as recipe contests, arts and crafts and theatre performance.



Key lessons

- › **Relevance to FARNET themes:** Adding value to local catch
- › **Results:** Initiated in 2008 and picking up speed in 2012 after receiving Axis 4 support, the scheme today attracts 690 registered buyers, coming from over 50 surrounding municipalities up to a distance of 30km, with some even coming from larger towns of Sète and Montpellier. With three fishermen and four oyster producers involved, an average of 22 fish/shellfish boxes are ordered each week, representing approximately €850 spent by local customers for local products.
- › **Transferability:** Based on the principles and objectives similar to those of Community Supported Fisheries (see FARNET guide #8), customers need to register upfront on the scheme's website to buy local seafood. However this scheme involves no binding contract between seafood producers and customers: a choice made to encourage hesitating customers to buy into the approach.
- › **Final Comment:** This scheme shows the importance of analysing expectations of both producers and customers. The choice to run a scheme without subscription was made after assessing the needs and expectations of potential customers, looking for fresh and local products but with fewer strings attached, and of producers, looking mostly to meet with local customers and add value to their catch. Also, by actively involving "ambassador customers" in running the scheme there is a very strong sense of local ownership and entrepreneurship.

Total cost and EFF contribution

Total Cost: €77 250

- › Axis 4 contribution: €38 625
- › National co-financing: €19 312
- › Local public match-funding ("*collectivités*"): €19 312

Project information

Title: Seafood baskets (*Les Paniers de Thau*)

Duration: 2011-2013

Case study date: January 2014

Project promoter

CPIE de Thau – Centre Permanent d'Initiatives pour l'Environnement
(CPIEs are environmental awareness-raising associations)

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