

Extending shrimp life span

FLAG: West Flanders

West Flanders, Belgium

Project overview

Local shrimp from Belgium can be offered fresh for a longer period, and without using preservatives, through the use of a newly developed fresh value chain. By improving cooking and cooling procedures, Flemish fishermen have enhanced shelf life significantly, increasing the competitiveness of their small-scale coastal fisheries.



Often hand-peeled abroad, most Belgian shrimps have undergone a long trip before returning to be sold on the local market. This requires extensive use of preservatives and sometimes freezing. Fresh, locally caught shrimps are available to consumers, but mostly in their unpeeled form and with a shelf life of just 4 days as they are traditionally cooked and cooled on-board using untreated sea water.

In Flanders, the FLAG supported a project which brought together the Flemish Fisheries Association (VVV) and a local SME, Brevisco BVBA, to develop an optimised boiling and cooling system based on research carried out by the Flemish Institute for

Agricultural and Fisheries Research (ILVO) and funded under Axis 3 of the EFF. A land-based prototype plant was built, allowing precise control of the temperature, time and salinity of the cooking process, meeting HACCP standards, eliminating bacterial contamination and ensuring intense cooling. This new process has significantly increased the natural shelf life of fresh local shrimp, making them more competitive without using preservatives.

Key lessons

- › **Relevance to FARNET themes:** Adding value to fisheries products, value chain improvement
- › **Results:** The project resulted in the development and installation of a land-based prototype boiling and cooling plant which can increase the life span of fresh shrimp from 4 days to 14 days without using preservatives. This means a new, high quality niche product, which can be differentiated from the bulk product on the local market. Fishermen can bring their shrimp for processing onshore and benefit from better prices, as well as the possibility of reaching new markets, further from the coast.
- › **Transferability:** Many traditional production processes around Europe would benefit from a critical review in order to identify shortcomings and develop solutions that add value to the existing methods used. Indeed, small improvements in the way the value chain operates can sometimes create significant economic gains as seen in this case study. FLAGs can play an important role in facilitating knowledge transfer and putting research into practice.
- › **Final Comment:** This project built on previous research which had been financed under Axis 3 of the EFF. Axis 4 was used as way to work with local entrepreneurs to put into practice the knowledge gained previously.

Total cost and EFF contribution

Total project cost: €231 250

- › EFF Axis 4: €84 406.25 (36.5%)
- › National co-financing: €112 156 (48.5%)
- › Private contribution: €34 687.5 (15%)

Project information

Title: Extending shrimp life span

Duration: Summer 2012 – Summer 2014

Case study date: February 2014

Project promoters:

VVV (Flemish Fisheries Association)

Brevisco BVBA

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