

## Commercialisation of new goose barnacle products

*FLAG: Ría de Vigo – A Guarda*  
Galicia, Spain

### Project overview

In Galicia, barnacles have traditionally been gathered by fishermen and fisherwomen and sold only as a fresh product, with no processing or added value. This project, promoted by barnacle gatherers, aims to create new products from barnacles, a highly sought after shellfish in Spain. The new products include natural canned barnacles and barnacle pâté with seaweed. These products add value to the barnacle, especially the smaller sized barnacles, which are in less demand and usually sold for a lower price.



### Context and Key Challenges



Barnacle picking has a long tradition in Baiona and A Guarda, and in Galicia generally. This is one of the most popular shellfish products in Spain, but one species of barnacle, which is smaller in size, has a lower market value. Despite their lower price, shellfish gatherers still collect these barnacles in order to prevent the colonisation of the habitat of the more valuable barnacles. It is important, therefore, that these lower value barnacles are commercially exploited, rather than discarded.

The shellfish gatherers of Baiona (12 154 inhabitants in 2010) and A Guardia (10 472 inhabitants) are organised into associations (with a total of 214 professional barnacle gatherers) and until recently they only sold barnacles through auctions. But huge quantities of the smaller size barnacle were collected and sold at a very low price.

In 2005 a group of women and men from both areas started to look for a solution to this problem. They created a company called *Mar de Silleiro LTD* which brought together 27 barnacle

gatherers. Recognising the limitations of selling only fresh barnacles, they developed the idea of preserving barnacles by introducing new processed products to the market, mainly using the smaller and less valuable ones. They began by researching and studying different recipes and their market potential. This work was funded by the national ministry of fisheries and by the regional ministry of fisheries (*Consellería do Mar*).

## Project objectives

The main objectives of this Axis 4 project were to:

1. Develop and launch two new products on the Spanish market: natural canned barnacles and barnacle pâté with seaweed, using barnacles of low commercial value
2. Research the potential for launching these new products on international markets.

## Project description

The project involves the development and launch on the Spanish market of two new products: natural canned barnacles and barnacle pâté with seaweed. The first priority of the project was to organise canning facilities. This was achieved by creating a partnership with the Antonio Pérez Lafuente cannery, a Galician cannery recognised for its commitment to responsible fishing, the quality of the raw materials it uses, and its high quality standards. The partnership arrangement provided for hiring the cannery's production line for one day per week.

Having secured the required production facilities, the project focused on marketing and branding. The first step was to design the brand, logos and packaging, and to register the brands to ensure their protection. To help with this, the project promoters contracted a company that specialised in product development and which also understood the work and lifestyle of the barnacle gatherers.

The next step was to develop a website with an on-line shop, a novel idea for the fisheries sector. This was seen as an essential tool for accessing certain markets and for communicating with consumers. The website, [www.mardesilleiro.com](http://www.mardesilleiro.com) gives consumers the possibility to buy directly from the company and, to facilitate on-line sales, the promoters have rented an office and a warehouse for packaging and distribution.

With the basic infrastructure in place, the product development company then assisted with developing the first product samples for tasting/testing and, subsequently, the final products for the market. They also helped to coordinate a promotional campaign, including the production of a promotional video for uploading to the website and to show in fairs or at other promotional or fisheries events in Spain and abroad. They also developed a stand for use at exhibitions and for merchandising, as well as other promotional material.

The public launch of the company, *Mar de Silleiro*, and its products took place at CETMAR (the "Technological Centre of the Sea") in Vigo, on the 3 November 2010. All 27 *percebeiras* (shellfish gatherers) attended this presentation where the press and invited guests were given the opportunity to taste the new products.



Following the launch, the promotional campaign began. So far, this has included attendance at fisheries exhibitions, meetings with distributors, retailers, gourmet outlets and delicatessens, etc. *Mar de Silleiro* recognises that the first years of the new enterprise are critical in terms of ensuring a successful introduction of the product to the market. Because of this, the company has actively participated in key exhibitions, such as the *Forum Gastronómico 2010* (Girona), the *Salón Internacional de Gourmets 2011* (Madrid) and the *Feria Internacional de Galicia 2011* (Silleda).

## Main actors involved

The promoters of the project are a group of shellfish gatherers from Baiona and A Guardia who established the company, *Mar de Silleiro*. This company was created to add value to the fresh barnacle. The company includes 27 shellfish gatherers or “percebeiras/os”, but a smaller group or board of representatives is leading the project. This group works closely with the Vigo FLAG, as well as with CETMAR and ANFACO (the national association of processors of fish and seafood preserves), which provide advice on technical aspects of the project.

## Project outcomes

It is still too early to predict the eventual outcome of this project. However, it is evident that the shellfish gatherers that joined the new company and participated in the project are more aware of, and interested in, the opportunity to add value through processing. They are already benefiting from an increase in their income thanks to the sale of the new products, and they are enjoying their new role as businesswomen/men. They also have considerable confidence in the potential of the existing products, the brands, and the new website.



The project also has a wider impact in the community, providing new employment opportunities, contributing to the local economy and boosting the confidence of the community in its future.

## Overcoming obstacles: key lessons

The challenges that had to be confronted were mainly linked to the lack of awareness of the new products by restaurants, shops, supermarkets and the general public, as well as the challenging economic environment. The launch of the products on the market was very successful, but the global economic crisis is having an impact and the turnover for the second three months of trading was three times lower than that for the first three months.

Another issue has been ensuring a continuous supply of the product. The lack of marketing experience was also an important challenge for the shellfish gatherers, especially in trying to identify and access new markets.



Additional challenges are related to conflicts within the sector, namely with those who believe that fishermen should only fish, but also with those who believe that it is the regional and national governments that should address problems in the fisheries sector rather than the fishermen themselves. This led to a politicisation of the process, which complicated and delayed certain developments.

The factors that were key to overcoming these challenges and to the success so far of the project include:

- › The motivation and active involvement of the shellfish gatherers
- › The innovation/novelty of the product in the marketplace
- › A strong interest in the product by gourmet shops
- › Broad coverage of the project in the local, regional and even national press and TV
- › The strong leadership role of a small group of women shellfish gatherers
- › The willingness of the project promoters to buy in expertise to assist with certain aspects of product development and marketing
- › The resolve of the promoters to overcome any politicisation of the project and to ensure its longterm success

## Future prospects

With the main investments made, and having secured a number of regular customers already, the shellfish gatherers can now afford to continue promoting their product through tastings and other activities aimed at increasing sales.

The promoters are highly motivated by the new venture and are keen to continue to grow and diversify their activities by developing new products and new markets. However, trading conditions remain difficult and a number of important issues need to be resolved. For example, the commercialisation of food products requires adherence to certain hygiene standards, which implies considerable financial investment. This, and other necessary investments will only generate a return in the longer term and a lack of funding for these activities could risk the promising future of the company.

In addition, the gathering of low quality barnacles is linked to a management plan, which is approved annually. To ensure a continuous supply, a longer term arrangement that provides more certainty needs to be agreed.

## Transferability

This project involves women, entrepreneurs and young people and establishes a system for the sustainable exploitation and production of new fisheries products. The project idea could be transferred to other small producer organisations – especially those involving barnacle gatherers in other parts of Galicia or beyond. The experience could also be useful for producers of other fisheries products who want to create a processed product.

The promoters have already received invitations to present the project to other FLAGs and fisheries associations, as well as at events being organized by FARNET and the European Commission.



## Costs and funding

Total project cost: €131 667.00

Total eligible cost: €91 667.00

FLAG contribution: €45 833.50 (50% of eligible cost, of which 61% EU, 19.5% national co-financing and 19.5% regional co-financing)

Private contribution: €45 833.50 (50%)

The total costs and Axis 4 contribution is broken down as follows:

Project activity	Total Cost	FLAG contribution
Rehabilitation of a local for warehouse and office	3 200	1 600
Office and stand furniture	5 858	2 929
Information and communication technologies (including on-line shop)	13 209	6 604.50
Graphic design (labelling, packaging, etc.) and corporate design	14 000	7 000
Promotional marketing	4 800	2 400
Equipment (machinery, transport)	48 000	24 000
Personnel (managing and marketing)	40 000	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>131 667</b>	<b>45 833.50</b>

## Project information

**Title:** Commercialisation of new goose barnacle products

**Duration:** mid-August 2010 until the end of October 2011 (15 months).

**Case study date:** May 2011

### Project promoter

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