

Innovation within UK seafood industry retail supply chains

Principal Investigators: Dr Emma Roe
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Host Institution: University of Southampton

Industry Partner: J Sainsbury plc

Industry Supervisor: Ally Dingwall, Sainsbury's

Project partners: Dr Julian Metcalf, Cefas (Centre
for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science);
John Avizienius, RSPCA (Royal Society for the Protection
of Cruelty to Animals); Bob Waller, Freedom Food

Fish farming, or aquaculture, is seen by the FAO as a more sustainable alternative to wild fisheries and can offer food security while relieving pressure on wild stocks and the marine environment. Consequently, farmed fish retail supply chains are the sites of much innovation as they work towards creating a more environmentally and socially sustainable supply chain, suitable for a low-carbon future with increasing protein demands to feed a growing global population.

Third party certification schemes, some of which operate with non-governmental organisation (NGO) support, are playing a significant role in supporting innovation in this sector. It is one of these innovative partnerships, between retailer, NGO and third party certifier that this research project is studying and contrasting with government-funded science in the aquaculture field.

Within the UK farmed fish industry, the partnership between the Royal Society for the Protection of Animals (RSPCA) and Freedom Food has been very successful in developing and implementing supply chain innovations that build upon the scientifically-proven link between product quality and fish welfare. Over the last 10 years they have researched and supported a range of innovations to the farming of Atlantic Salmon by updating RSPCA production standards. Their success in creating a quality fish product that also meets the corporate social responsibility agendas of food retail partners has been rewarded. Major retail companies, such as Sainsbury's, have chosen to develop their farmed Atlantic Salmon supply chains in partnership with RSPCA Freedom Food to form a strong integrated supply chain that can support and encourage innovation.



The research project will aim to address the following questions:

- How do retail industry-NGO relationships support innovation in the aquaculture industry?
- Where do the aims and intentions of corporate retail overlap with those of the NGO?
- How are supply chain innovations produced through large-scale retailer-driven experiments within the aquaculture industry, contrasted with laboratory-based Government-funded fish science?
- Is Government-funded laboratory fish science supporting the scientific needs of the commercial aquaculture industry?
- What level of interest is there in fish welfare from consumers and industry-workers?
- How can a poor public understanding of aquaculture be addressed to increase the market for farmed fish?

This research, sponsored by Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd and commencing in **May 2010**, will further our understanding of the role of science and NGO-retailer-producer relationships in supporting innovation in the aquaculture industry.

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