

“TRACEFISH”

Establishing standards for the traceability of seafood products

Traceability means the ability to trace and follow a food, a feed, a food-producing animal, or any substance intended to be, or expected to be, incorporated into a food or feed. Since January 2005, “one-up, one-down” traceability is required throughout the European Union, meaning that food and feed business operators have to be able to identify any person from whom they have been supplied with a product, as well as the businesses to which their products have been supplied. Moreover, these operators are obliged to have in place systems and procedures which allow for this information to be made available to the competent authorities on demand.



Because of the large amount of information that is needed, it is no longer practical to transmit all the relevant data physically along with the product on a label. A more sensible approach could be to mark each package with a unique identifier, and then transmit or extract all the relevant information electronically.

TraceFish was the short title for the "Traceability of Fish Products" concerted action project which ran from 2000 until 2002, and was co-ordinated by the Norwegian Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture (Fiskeriforskning). The aim of the project was to **bring together companies and research institutes to establish common views with respect to what data should follow a fish product through the chain from the time it is caught or farmed until it reaches the consumer**. Originally 24 companies/institutes were members of the consortium, but as the project and the standardization process grew, so did the number of participants, and at the end there were well over 100, including major European fish exporters, processors, importers and research institutes.

The project hosted 4 international conferences and arranged

workshops discussing traceability issues specifically relating to farmed fish, captured fish and technical aspects. This resulted in three **consensus-based standards for recording and exchange of traceability information in the seafood chains**:

- Farmed Fish standard
- Captured Fish standard
- Technical standard

The standards lay down where, what and how data should be recorded in the farmed and wild caught fish chain for full chain traceability. They also identify how modern electronics and software can be used to transmit data through the chain and the standards to be used to successfully obtain the data if and when required. All three TraceFish standards are publicly available. The two fish industry standards are sold and distributed through CEN, the European Committee for Standardization. The technical (XML) standard is being maintained directly by the members in the TraceFish technical group, and it is currently distributed freely.

The TraceFish project was established to ensure that the fish industry would have available a simple, integrated and practical system of traceability using the best technology. The project went beyond the demanded “one-up,

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TRACEFISH

Full title of Project:

Traceability of fish products

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Web-site:www.tracefish.org**Coordinator**

Mr. Petter Olsen
Norwegian Institute of Fisheries
and Aquaculture Ltd
Muninbakken 9-13
9291 Tromsø
Norway

Phone: +47 7762 9231

Fax: +47 7762 9100

Email:

petter.olsen@fiskeriforskning.no

one-down" traceability, and thereby made it possible to offer its users the extra benefits from standardized exchange of traceability information.



The TraceFish standards now **form the basis for numerous traceability implementations** in the industry, both privately funded projects and pilot R&D projects with public funding, where the goal is electronic interchange of food traceability information. In both the EU 6th Framework integrated projects Seafood Plus (PP-AF-TRAC-01) and TRACE the TraceFish Technical Standard is being used, extended and amended. The principles, methods and standards for how to implement chain traceability developed in TraceFish have also been successfully applied in other food sectors. Based on the TraceFish model and the TraceFish documents, the **TraceFood Framework** was set up (www.tracefood.co.uk), where the goal is to make the principles and recommendations developed in TraceFish applicable to food in general. Several projects and initiatives are involved in establishing and further

developing the TraceFood Framework, and on a meeting in York in October 2006, all existing EU-funded traceability projects (around 10, see the web site for the PETER project, www.eu-peter.org) supported the TraceFood Framework and decided to use it as a basis for future implementations. The TraceFood Framework contains a standard for unit identification (SGTIN), a principle for how to keep track of the material chain, generic and sector-specific "Good Traceability Practice" documents as well as specifications of generic and sector-specific languages for electronic interchange of traceability data (TraceCore XML and sector-specific XMLs). The TraceFish standards, recommendations, documents, principles and XML were the template for their TraceFood counterparts, and TraceFood now incorporates the updated version of the outcome of TraceFish.

Although still commonly referred to as TraceFish (the CEN standards in particular), TraceFood is now the proper name for the framework that contains, among other things, TraceFish, and **future developments, including the gradual extension of the number of food sectors covered by the framework documents, will happen as part of the TraceFood initiative and be supported by numerous traceability projects and partners.**

"TRACEFISH HOSTED 4
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