

## Event Summary

# The gain of food system cooperation in the Nordic region –from healthy waters to healthy people

**Date: 16<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

### Participant summary:

We have 116 registrants from 43 countries (Angola, Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, China, Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Ghana, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nigeria, Norway, Philippines, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Tonga, Tunisia, United Kingdom, United States, Vietnam and Zimbabwe).

47 registrants attended the live event with 41% attendance rate. 23% of the attendees were from Africa, 27% from Asia, and 50% from Europe with 36% from the government and 64% from non-governmental organisations.

The event recording can be found [here](#).

### Webinar content summary:

Dr. Shakuntala (WorldFish) opened the webinar by briefly introducing the Global Action Network, followed by a detailed dissemination of the mission of the network, and the aims of this webinar by the leader of the network Ms. Anita Utheim Iversen.

Mr. Bjørnar Skjæran (Norwegian Minister of Fisheries and Ocean Policy, Norwegian Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries) gave the welcoming remarks highlighting food security and sustainable aquatic food systems in the Nordic region. And to achieve these, it is important to adopt a holistic approach to include the entire aquatic food chain (from healthy waters to healthy people), and through trust and collaboration.

Dr. Francesco Branca (Director of the Department of Nutrition and Food Safety at WHO) also emphasized the need for holistic approaches to ensure access to affordable healthy diets for all, sustainably and inclusively. He also reminded us that the world is not on track to meet its commitments to end hunger and malnutrition in all its forms by 2030.

Prof. Peter Haugan (Institute of Marine Research, Norway; University of Bergen, Norway) pointed out that the UN Decade of Ocean Science addresses the need to generate knowledge, support innovation, and develop solutions to optimize the role of the ocean in sustainably feeding the world's population under changing environmental, social and climate conditions.

Dr. Stein Mortensen (Institute of Marine Research, Norway) showcased an inter-Nordic collaboration project between science, government and industry related to the invasion of Pacific oysters in 2007 leading up to a knowledge platform that may serve as a management model that

enables the development of commercial harvest and marketing of Pacific oysters.

Dr. Valur N. Gunnlaugsson (Matis ohf / Icelandic Food and Biotech R&D) stated that in the Nordic countries production from aquatic sources has played an important socio-economic role and will continue to do so for the unforeseen future. However, he also pointed out that the lack of access to test and demonstration facilities has been identified as a key barrier that must be overcome to maintain the highly competitive edge of the Nordic aquatic sector.

Prof. Ingibjorg Gunnarsdottir (University of Iceland) complimented that we know much more about iodine nutrition in the Nordic countries than we did 10 years ago, but there are still many data gaps and Nordic collaboration will continue to be of value in this area.

Prof. Rune Blomhoff (University of Oslo, Norway) explained how the new Nordic Nutrition Recommendations will constitute the common scientific basis for national nutrient recommendations and dietary guidelines in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, and the three Baltic countries Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The Nordic Nutrition Recommendations are a leading example of regional co-operation in the area of diet, health and sustainability.

Annica Solström (Swedish Food Agency) highlighted that the Nordic keyhole is well-known in the Nordic countries, 60% of the population used this keyhole to make healthy dietary choices.

Prof. Lene Frost Andersen (University of Oslo, Norway) emphasized that the Nordic cooperation is an important and unique platform for research collaboration to understand how the keyhole label can be used to change the dietary behavior through a more system approach across the food system actors.

Henrik Stenwig (Norwegian Seafood Federation) pointed out that the Norwegian Seafood Federation consider the Nordic Keyhole symbol as a useful measure contributing to the ambition of the Health Authority to increase the proportion of seafood in the diets of the Norwegian consumers. But he also underlines the fact that changes are difficult to achieve.

#### Q&A:

There were 6 questions asked to the panelists by the participants.

**Q: What are the impacts of this oyster on local communities? Did it effect their livelihoods negatively or positively and who will benefit from marketing this oyster?**

A: (Dr. Stein Mortensen) We see that there is a negative impact related to the establishment of oyster populations on shallow waters, with the result that people cannot use these areas (beaches) if not cleaned. However, there are companies now harvesting the Pacific oysters, depurate them and sell them on national markets. There are also a few companies who make money on "oyster tourism", taking people out to visit the oyster reefs, collect and taste. So this can turn out positive for Nordic shellfish growers and harvesting.

**Q: My name is Alushe, I am from Namibia. Namibia is currently farming Pacific Oyster (*Crassostrea gigas*). My observation is that there is an insatiable market for pacific oyster and even though it seems to be an invasive species for the Nordic countries, in my view it could be the next blue food for Nordic countries. I would like to know whether there is currently a market for Pacific Oyster in the Nordic country or whether it is considered more as a nuisance species at the moment?**

A: (Dr. Stein Mortensen) In fact both. The Environment Directorate communicate with us on how to keep beaches and marine protected areas as free as possible from Pacific oysters. At the same time,

consumers are interested in new seafood items. There is not a strong culture for eating oysters in the Nordic countries, but I think this changes. We try now to generate a project on the Pacific oyster as a new Nordic product. With the right price, quality and "image", there will clearly be a market.

**Q: building on the question from Alushe; what is the global perspective of the oyster? What do we need to protect communities where initially women were involved in oyster business (example The Gambia) to remain key actors in the business; enabling them to reach the interesting markets?**

A: (Dr. Stein Mortensen) A bit challenging. Oysters are global products. They may be kept alive and transported over long distances (a part of the small Norwegian consumption is imported, rather low-quality French oysters). I think it is important to have a close dialog with local companies in order to find niches for locally harvested and farmed shellfish.

**Q: How do you think Norway can face international competition on the marine resources market, with fierce competition, especially from the Asian producers?**

A: (Dr. Stein Mortensen) I think many consumers are interested in locally produced products with a production having a low climate impact. Locally produced shellfish are ideal here.

(Dr. Valur Gunnlaugsson) Norway and the Nordic countries have to put emphasis on the clean source the products are coming from. We have to flag that we are utilizing the resources in a sustainable way and we have to find innovative ways to get the message all the way to the end consumers.

**Q: Are you optimistic regarding the iodine intake of vulnerable people in the Nordic countries reaching adequate levels in the future?**

A: (Prof. Ingibjorg Gunnarsdottir) In the perfect world intake of fish and dairy products would be in line with food-based recommendations and we would not be facing problems with iodine intake in the Nordic countries. But if the trend towards lower intake of fish and dairy products continues more countries would need to consider mandatory use of iodized salt to reach adequate levels.

**Q: Have you so far in the literature review discovered any obvious knowledge gaps needed to provide better advice on food choices?**

A: (Prof. Rune Blomhoff) Yes, there are a lot of knowledge gaps, and scientific studies continuously contribute to build our science base better and better. We have a strong science base for dietary guideline - but several questions remain to be solved.