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D 2.2 SWOT analysis of structures for knowledge transfer between science and industry

1. Introduction

During the roundtable sessions of the first Euroshell stakeholders meeting, we discussed the constraints and opportunities relating to the transfer of knowledge within the European shellfish sector. We focussed specifically on knowledge transfer in terms of direct contact between producers, scientists and other experts or stakeholders, where knowledge transfer can be both within certain groups (for example: producers from one region sharing knowledge with producers in other regions) or between producers and scientists or other experts. To summarise, the participants were specifically asked to discuss and reflect upon the constraints and opportunities in transferring knowledge between producers, scientists and other experts or stakeholders.

2. Method

Participants in the first 2 round tables were asked to identify the main elements for the SWOT analysis on the basis of a list of issues that was prepared by WP 2. When it showed that the list was considered relevant by the participants, the following round tables were asked to give points to the different items by distributing 10 stickers according to their priority. Participants were free to distribute their stickers as they liked. The colour of the sticker corresponded to their profile as stakeholder (farmer, researcher, regulator, consultant). The conveners ordered the priority according to the number of stickers per item.

3. Outcomes

Strengths

The participants of the roundtable sessions were asked to discuss the strengths within the shellfish sector that provide the building blocks for the efficient transfer of knowledge between producers, scientists and other experts or stakeholders. Below is a list of the strengths mentioned by the participants, prioritized on the basis of the discussions and voting procedure.

- 1 Level of organisation within the industry
- 2 Strength of industry network (“one family”)
- 3 Expertise within the industry
- 4 Expertise of scientists
- 5 Existing structures for communication
- 6 Trust among industry participants
- 7 Trust of industry – science partners
- 8 Willingness to share knowledge
- 9 Critical mass of producers potentially willing to participate
- 10 Role of intermediaries in the transfer of knowledge

Weaknesses

The participants of the roundtable sessions were asked to discuss the weaknesses that prohibit the efficient transfer of knowledge between producers, scientists and other experts or stakeholders. Below is a list of the constraints mentioned by the participants, prioritized on the basis of the discussions and voting procedure.

- 1 Lack of funding for knowledge transfer (not in all European member states)

- 2 The cost of research to the sector (private vs. public)
- 3 Lack of capability to match the needs of the sector and what science has to offer (matching science and practice); available knowledge may not be applied enough
- 4 Lack of practical applicability research outcomes (fundamental vs. applied research; short-term versus long-term research); scientists need to be working closely together with producers to listen carefully what the research needs are or could be in the future
- 5 Lack of training/education within the sector
- 6 On a European level, little or no structured knowledge exchange is taking place between producers of different countries who share the same challenges
- 7 Regional differentiation/geographical focus – no general solutions
- 8 Research as a funding tool, not a tool to solve problems facing the sector
- 9 The complexity in transferring scientific knowledge: -> scientists may lack communication tools and skills to build a bridge between the results of scientific knowledge and the needs of the sector. Example: producers may not be confident with graphs and texts, in which case it is better to give a demonstration
- 10 Language and culture thresholds (ability to communicate with colleagues in other European countries)
- 11 Lack of trust among participants/lack of willingness to share knowledge because of economic reasons
- 12 Direction of knowledge exchange (top down vs bottom-up)
- 13 Role of intermediaries in the transfer of knowledge (sometimes acting as a barrier between producers and knowledge providers)

Opportunities

The participants of the roundtable sessions were asked to discuss the opportunities that may pave the way for the efficient transfer of knowledge between producers, scientists and other experts or stakeholders. This could be both within those groups (for example: producers from one region sharing knowledge with producers in other regions) or between them (for example: scientists sharing knowledge with producers). Below is a list of the opportunities mentioned by the participants, prioritized on the basis of the discussions and voting procedure.

- 1 Within the new EMFF, the transfer of knowledge is a central element. This provides funding opportunities for the shellfish sector
- 2 Throughout Europe, several best-practices exist that can act as examples to the rest of the sector (for example, the Fisheries Knowledge Groups and FLAGs)
- 3 The appointment of people who can work as intermediaries between producers, scientists and other experts or stakeholders (local/regional/national/international)
- 4 Producers defining the research agenda (i.e. Aquainnova, Fisheries Knowledge Groups)
- 5 Pilot projects on knowledge transfer on a European scale: producers, scientists and other experts from different regions sharing knowledge and experience on common themes (knowledge exchange/study visits and shared projects); FLAGs/ Fisheries Knowledge Groups. FLAGs have cooperation budgets which they can use to exchange knowledge with FLAGs in other regions.

- 6 Developing indicators for the transfer of knowledge; defining benchmarks for success -> example: the UK government checks the difference in profit before and after a project through tax data.
- 7 Producers should define the research priorities together with the public authorities.

Threats

The participants of the roundtable sessions were asked to discuss the threats that the shellfish sector is facing in terms of successful transfer of knowledge. Below is a list of the threats mentioned by the participants.

- 1 Competition at national and international level hampers knowledge transfer
- 2 The industry usually does not identify pre-competitive knowledge explicitly
- 3 Public funding for shared research projects between producers and scientists usually means that the results are also publicly available. Not all those involved would like this kind of knowledge to be shared because of aspects related to competition.
- 4 There is a lack of communication between science and industry as they speak different languages
- 5 Due to the financial crisis, governments are cutting down on research budgets aimed at scientific research for the shellfish sector.

4. Summary and conclusions

The SWOT analysis shows that the main opportunities as identified by the round tables, can be found in further developing existing structures that facilitate direct communication between producers and scientists, including specialists that act as intermediates. This should also lead to expression of research needs by the industry, and this should be tested in specific pilot projects. This should be the answer to the weaknesses and the threats.

Table 1. Top 5 SWOT items

STRONG	WEAK
Level of organisation within the industry; strength of the industry network ; expertise within the industry; expertise of scientists; existing structures for communication	lack of funding for knowledge transfer; the cost of research to the sector; lack of capability to match sector needs by science; lack of practical applicability of research outcomes; lack of education within the sector
THREATS	OPPORTUNITIES
competition within the industry; low awareness of pre-competitive knowledge domains; public funding implies public results; lack of communication between science and industry; decrease in available budgets for research	transfer of knowledge as priority in EMFF; expansion of FLAGS and knowledge groups; setting up expertise as intermediaries; producer based research agendas; pilot projects for knowledge transfer