

project news

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ACRUNET Partner meet in Paris - the hub of the market

During the last week in May, the ACRUNET partners gathered for their third project meeting in Paris which was very generously hosted by FranceAgriMer. The meeting was held over two days, the 29th and 30th of May and was enhanced by the attendance of a substantial representation from the fishing industries of Ireland, the UK and France. It was a very productive conference and indicative of the gathering pace of ACRUNET as the various project Activities begin to evolve and complement each other.

Commenting after the event Dominique Schnabele said "FranceAgriMer was very happy to welcome the partners for a fruitful working session. The atmosphere among the participants was productive and relaxed. It was really gratifying to see the activities developing and harmonising. And we enjoyed a nice evening tasting brown crab, at last!"

The development of a European Seafood Standard specifically for brown crab is now more than an aspiration - considerable progress has been made on reviewing existing standards in the partner countries and a combined version which would encompass the most desirable elements of existing models is being constructed. Reflecting the demands of both retailers and consumers, ACRUNET is eager that this deliverable will be accredited to the highest possible international standard. (See "A European Standard for Brown Crab" page three).

The partners learned that the crab producing countries - UK, Ireland and France - have carried out extensive consultation with the various industry sectors; fishermen, exporters and processors have all contributed to this process. The opinions and data gathered have gone a long way to building up a comprehensive picture which will inform the industry analysis being carried out which, in turn, will prove invaluable to the partners carrying out the market research and, ultimately, consumer-focused education and promotion.

Transporting live crab from peripheral fishing grounds to markets in France, Spain and Portugal has always been one of the more challenging aspects of the industry; ACRUNET will carry out a monitoring programme during the coming year to identify the critical "squeeze" points and possible solutions to improve the quality of delivered crab and thereby improve financial viability for the sector. Of course this work will also reflect favourably on efforts to improve fishery sustainability and environmentally sound exploitation of an Atlantic Area natural resource.

Initial responses to questionnaire-based research by FranceAgriMer reveals that the industry still favours marketing efforts focused in Europe; not surprisingly, the UK and French responses indicated a need for increased marketing effort in their domestic markets reflecting their already well developed local consumption. The FranceAgriMer-led marketing campaign will be pursued in the short term with an emphasis on engaging with younger consumers, highlighting not only the health benefits of

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eating crab but its ease of preparation and its excellent environmental credentials.

The partners reviewed the ACRUNET website, which is available in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese, and have made some observations which have been incorporated; the website will continue to grow and develop throughout its existence and all partners are invited to participate in this process. The project Newsletter will be available on the web-site. The partners agreed that communication and information items, particularly when produced for industry, should be available in the partner languages.

ACRUNET - In The Evening!

The ACRUNET partners believe in making the most of every opportunity to promote their industry. Not content with spending two hard-working days discussing and debating the problems of the crab trade, their relaxation meant a meal in the famous "Le Crabe Marteau" where, thanks to Jacques Person of the Beganton shellfish company, everyone sampled the delights of eating brown crab. This very atmospheric restaurant was packed with diners, young and old, and really illustrated how the originality of the background and presentation sold the product; now we

must persuade every seafood restaurant to provide wooden mallets and bibs!



"Thank you" to Dominique Schnabele, FranceAgriMer, for taking care of the photographs at the meeting and in "Le Crabe Marteau".

Space-Age Technology Could Help Solve Age-Old Gear Problem



An Irish crab-fishing company may have the solution to the perennial problem of lost fishing gear, a particularly difficult problem for those using pots and creels. Strong tides and stormy weather all contribute to strings

of gear being moved about the sea-bed with serious financial consequences for their owners. Not alone that the missing gear may never be retrieved, many skippers spend hours of valuable fishing time searching - an expensive and often frustrating exercise.

Now an innovative collaboration between McBride Fishing Company in Donegal and the local Institute of Technology could see every crab pot being electronically tagged allowing the fishing vessels to track and locate every pot. Researchers at the WiSAR Lab facility within Letterkenny Institute of Technology, have designed a wireless system which will monitor the crab fishing process. The system will work by recording the number of fishing pots deployed during the hauling operation as well as counting and recording the number of caught crabs. It will also be able to

record sea-bed temperature, location and depth readings using wireless and GPS technologies. Pete McBride from McBride Fishing said "This technology will allow us to gauge both the lifespan of the crab pots and of our ropes," adding that it would help the company keep its costs down and went on "It will also count the number of crab coming into the vessels to give us exact percentages of caught crab so we should be able to locate the more beneficial fishing areas".

Sufian Al Aswad, who manages the WiSAR Lab, said the introduction of wireless sensor technology into the fishing industry is in itself innovative. "Developing an accurate counting system for fishing pots, caught crabs, sea bed temperature readings and GPS mappings is going to play a major role in assisting the Irish fishing industry in shaping future strategies," he said.

With the current emphasis on the need for seafood traceability and accountability, such systems could be invaluable to the fisherman; the potential applications are enormous and far-reaching.

This research has been partly funded under Enterprise Ireland's Innovation Partnership scheme.

A European Standard for Brown Crab

Driven by the increased globalisation of all aspects of commerce and, indeed, life itself, the standards industry with its attendant certification, accreditation, auditing and compliance sectors, has grown enormously in recent years. The resultant, and sometimes very confusing, array of standards complete with arty logos and catchy slogans may be close to creating "standard fatigue" even with their target consumers. The consumer may not always be aware

of the underlying message of a particular standard and may, for instance, fail to differentiate between food quality and environmental issues.

Seafish has attempted to bring some clarity to this situation with its recently launched "The Guide to Seafood Standards" which provides detailed information on all the certification schemes currently relevant to seafood, many of which also appear on product labelling and menus. It incorporates

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an interactive tool which describes how each standard is applied and the criteria used to measure factors such as food safety, environment, animal and social welfare. So, against this backdrop, do we really need another standard specifically for brown crab?

The answer is YES. ACRUNET owes its existence, in part, to the need for a transnational European-wide standard. In earlier times a major source of discord among stakeholders was disagreement on what constituted "quality". It was evident that quality meant different things to different people – the criteria for those in processing looking for "full" crab were quite different to those involved in transporting live crab to further and further destinations, seasonal fluctuations are enormous, the moulting and reproductive cycles create yet another set of variables. Added to the need for a common understanding on quality criteria, there is enormous pressure exerted by the retail industry to provide reassurance that wild fisheries are exploited in a sustainable and environmentally-friendly manner. Brown crab fisheries have developed in the member countries in different ways – small artisanal inshore operations in some areas to large, deep-sea, purpose-built vivier crabbers in others.

Traditional products, such as whole crab bought live and cooked by the consumer, are having to compete with more innovative formats – crab meat, crab pâté, dressed crab – the list goes on.

ACRUNET Activity 4 aims to demonstrate the feasibility of a standard for brown crab based on Responsibility, Traceability and Quality. The initial work of this Activity has established existing standards in Ireland, the United Kingdom and France which already encompass considerable common ground. They are, respectively, the BIM Responsibly Sourced Seafood (RSS) which has been accredited to ISO 65 level, the Seafish Responsible Fishing Scheme (RFS) which has not yet been accredited and Pêcheur Responsable which is ISO 65 level but not accredited. The challenge for Activity 4 is to develop an Annex for these existing standards which is workable and auditable. Such an Annex must cater for existing practices in individual areas and yet raise the bar for the transnational industry. Most importantly, Activity 4 must show that participating in a scheme which purports to raise standards must not place an insupportable financial burden on industry, particularly small scale fishermen.

On The Way to Improving Crab Transport



Image above: dawn at Rathmullan Pier, Co Donegal.

The objective of improving the transport of brown crab took a major step forward when the Activity 6 team, Drs Roger Uglow and Katie Smyth from Hull University and John Fagan, BIM, began their work in the cold dawn light of 23rd September. The journey began with a load of *vivier* caught crab which was loaded onto a *vivier*-equipped truck at Rathmullan Pier,

Co Donegal, in the far north-west of Ireland and was followed to its destination in Brittany, France.

Basic parameters such as temperature and salinity were recorded and samples were taken from crab for further analysis in the lab. These parameters were repeated when the crab were delivered to France. This base-line information is essential if trials assessing the merits different types of transport are to be meaningful.



The ACRUNET team would like to thank all the crew and staff of Hannigan Fish Trading in Donegal and Jacques Person, Beganton in France, for their help and cooperation which made this work possible.

Image left: arrival of the caught crabs in Brittany.

Crab Thermidor

Recipe by Paul Harvey, Head Chef, Bolton's Bistro (Cliftonville Hotel) – Cromer

Ingredients

Serves 2:

- 2 brown crabs, cooked & picked.
- (Keep the shells)
- 2 tsp butter
- 2 shallots or onion, finely chopped
- 200ml brandy
- 75ml double cream
- ½ tsp English mustard
- 2 tbsp chopped parsley
- ½ lemon juice
- 4 tbsp freshly grated Cheddar
- Basmati rice (to serve)

Directions

1. Sauté the onions/shallots in the butter until transparent and soft, add the crab meats, lemon juice, brandy then reduce and cook out the brandy.
2. Add the double cream and simmer for 2-3 minutes to reach the correct consistency (should coat the back of a spoon)
3. Add the English mustard and stir-in together. This is the "Thermidor"
4. Place the "Thermidor" mixture into the crab shells and bake in the oven for 10 minutes
5. Top with Cheddar, place under grill for a couple of minutes until golden brown
6. Serve with basmati rice & garnish



Be Your Own Market Analyst

With EUMOFA the European Market Observatory

(<http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/market-observatory/home>)

The European Market Observatory for fisheries and aquaculture (EUMOFA) is a market intelligence tool on the European Union fisheries and aquaculture sector.

It aims to:

- Increase market transparency and efficiency
- Analyse EU markets dynamics
- Support business decisions and policy-making

EUMOFA provides data from first sale to consumption. Data are collected from EU countries (plus Norway and Iceland) and from European institutions. They are updated daily.

This innovative website has enormous potential and though based on complex data and software is easy to use with excellent user guides. Here are illustrations of some of the reports you can run with very little difficulty or experience.

Weekly prices

Main fresh products and places of sale

Monthly trends

Volume and value by species and place of sale

Yearly data

Consolidated data by species and Member State

Price structure

Methodology for understanding prices along the supply chain



All products along the supply chain by Main Commercial Species

Commodity Group: Crustaceans
Main Commercial Species: Crab
Currency: EUR

Consumption/Retail

Place of Sale	Product	Week 2010/09	Week 2011/09	Week 2012/09	Week 2013/08	Selected Week 2013/08
Latvia	Crab sticks, 1 kg			3,58	4,90	4,90
Poland	Flavoured crab sticks, 250g	1,25	1,22	1,21	1,20	1,21
		-3,20%	-0,82%		-0,83%	
Sweden	Crab, fresh, 1 kg	10,47	14,48	10,53	15,36	15,39
United Kingdom	Crab, whole, fresh, 1 kg	46,99%	6,28%	46,15%	0,20%	
		14,53	18,29	20,58	18,14	20,71
		42,53%	13,23%	0,63%	14,17%	

Prices per kg
Percentages refer to the most recent available figure in the row Data provided by:

EUROPANEL
LV - CSB - Centrālā statistikas pārvalde
PL - GUS - Główny Urząd Statystyczny

IE - IRELAND

Commodity Group	Feb 2011		Feb 2012		Jan 2013		Feb 2013	
	Volume	Value	Volume	Value	Volume	Value	Volume	Value
Bivalves and other molluscs and aquatic invertebrates	141	0,21	98	0,17	89	0,24	35	0,11
	-75,18%	-48,20%	-64,34%	-35,34%	-60,60%	-55,21%	n/a	n/a
Cephalopods	20	0,02	14	0,05	9	0,04	n/a	0,03
	-64,50%	35,71%	-48,72%	-43,17%	-18,29%	-22,78%	n/a	n/a
Crustaceans	167	0,56	298	1,92	340	1,44	176	0,60
	5,25%	7,20%	-40,99%	-68,97%	-48,32%	-58,65%	n/a	n/a

Source: EUMOFA: Market trends; Predefined queries; First sales - Monthly aggregates, three-year comparison (updated 15.04.2013)

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