

Pet Food from the Blue Baltic

Date: Monday, 28 April 2025

Theme: Blue Foods

The workshop, organized by Baltic MUPPETS and RoundGoby, focused on developing new value chains and products from underutilized species and resources in the Baltic region. The discussions centered around small mussels and Round Goby, along with other potential resources.

Small Mussels:

Participants identified several bottlenecks in utilizing small mussels as food, such as the absence of legislation recognizing mussels as human food and the challenge of opening up the market for these resources. They brainstormed innovative products from mussels, including:

- **Cosmetics:** Using mussel coloring for cosmetic products and incorporating the shimmering shell parts into shiny hair shampoos.
- **Functional Foods:** Developing functional food powders made from mixed mussels, offering nutritional benefits.
- **Fertilizers:** Creating calcium-rich fertilizers for garden soil.
- **Pet Snacks:** Making pet snacks more appealing by creating cute shapes like bones.

The workshop emphasized the need for legislation supporting regenerative aquaculture at both small and large scales. Consumer acceptance and awareness were deemed critical for the success of these products. Collaborations between industry and academia were suggested to mitigate the costs associated with raising awareness and marketing, supporting the commercialization of mussel-based products. Additionally, developing new processing methods and production lines was seen as essential, with possibilities for franchising or new technologies.

Round Goby:

For Round Goby, the workshop explored several potential products, including:

- **Pickled and Smoked Fish:** Creating products similar to herring.
- **Fish Patties and Fish Fingers:** Developing convenient and familiar food products.
- **Sushi and Canned Fish:** Introducing Round Goby in well-accepted forms.

However, bottlenecks such as the time required for the fish to grow to a suitable size, lack of cultural acceptance, labor-intensive catching methods, and underdeveloped processing machinery were noted. The hesitancy of pet owners to switch to new feeds due to potential intestinal problems for dogs was discussed, with solutions like increasing trust and developing treats for both pets and humans.

Other challenges included the lack of reliable stock assessments, with examples from Kalmar, Sweden, and Latvia. The invasive nature of Round Goby posed regulatory challenges, as fishing it is not allowed in some countries. The workshop emphasized the importance of public information and media coverage to raise awareness about the ecological impact of invasive species like Round Goby. Collaborative efforts between industry and academia were suggested to support commercialization and address marketing and consumer awareness costs.

Other Species of Interest:

The workshop also considered other underutilized species and resources in the Baltic region, including:

- **Seaweed:** Potential use in beer production.
- **Duck Mussels and Zebra Mussels:** Exploring their potential for various applications.
- **Water Plants:** Including cat tail and other vegetables.
- **Herring and Macroalgae:** Traditional resources with potential for new value chains.
- **Sediment:** Dredged from the sea bottom, which could be used for construction or as a nutrient-rich fertilizer.
- **Sea Stars:** Often found under mussel farms, which could be used for feed and as a side stream for mussel farmers.
- **Marine Worms:** Expensive and used for fishing, growing on organic lower bottoms.

The workshop concluded that collaborative efforts between industry and academia are essential to support the commercialization of products derived from these underutilized species. Developing new processing methods, increasing consumer awareness, and addressing regulatory challenges are critical steps towards creating sustainable and profitable value chains in the Baltic region.