

Research report

Factors influencing consumption of farmed seafood products in the Pacific northwest ☆

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Abstract

This study used a mail survey ($n = 1159$ usable surveys) of Pacific northwest (US) residents to understand general seafood preferences (familiarity, price, freshness, health and environmental concerns), beliefs and attitudes specific to aquaculture versus wild products, and how those cognitive factors affect decisions to consume types of farmed seafood products. Respondents strongly agreed that seafood is healthy, and they preferred wild over farmed products. Many respondents were uncertain about human health and environmental benefits and problems associated with aquaculture. While there was agreement that aquaculture reduces pressure on wild fish, there was equally strong agreement that it has the same problems as other agricultural practices. Belief in the superiority of wild seafood was a strong predictor of consumption choices. Belief in the benefits of aquaculture was positively related to higher consumption of farmed products, but – unexpectedly – beliefs related to environmental and health problems associated with aquaculture did not predict specific consumption choices. Nearly half of respondents recalled hearing or reading about aquaculture in the mass media, and recall of negative stories contributed to a general preference for wild products, but not consumption of specific types of farmed products. Consumption of the different classes of products had some different predictors, and communication efforts directed at different beliefs may have different impacts on consumer behavior.

Highlights

▶ We investigated preferences and beliefs related to aquaculture products. ▶ Wild fish were generally considered superior to farmed products. ▶ Beliefs about the benefits and problems of aquaculture were mixed. ▶ Beliefs about aquaculture and recall of negative media were related to a general preference for wild seafood.

Keywords

Farmed fish; Risk perception; Seafood consumption; Mass media