

## RESEARCH REGARDING CONSUMER PREFERENCES IN ACQUIRING FISH AND FISH PRODUCTS

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### Abstract

*Fish represents a functional food due to its nutritional qualities and their influences on human health. Man became very concerned for his welfare as a result seeks to introduce in nutrition safe food products. This study presents a conceptual framework based on the theory of planned behaviour to establish the awareness and fish consumption, preferences regarding the forms under which the fish is sold and places of purchase. A questionnaire was submitted to a group of 50 people of different ages, and the results were analysed and presented as a percentage rate from the total. The results showed that from the respondents 96% prefers and consumes fish; 70% prefer fresh fish when asked to choose from different fish assortments; as frequency: 66% consumes monthly, 18% consumes weekly, 10% occasional and 6% don't consume; as a buying place for different assortments: 75% prefers producers' stores from agro-food markets for fresh fish, 95% prefers hypermarkets for different products obtained from fish. It can be concluded the fact that it is know and consume fish meat among all age groups, showing a good knowledge of the benefits of a diet based on healthy products, fish being a safe alternative to diversify the diet and changes in consumer attitudes towards the fish meat can be done by family influence, educational system and society.*

**Key words:** fish, consumption, preferences, acquiring

### INTRODUCTION

In recent years consumers of food products reserves the right to choose what is safe for a healthy nutrition. Nutrition represents a key factor which can affect development, health and well fare of the human body [5]. A healthy diet must include fish consumption twice a week at specialist recommendation [5]. Recently, fish meat is considered a functional food, due to its high nutritional value (proteins, polyunsaturated fatty acids  $\omega$  3 and  $\omega$  6, minerals etc.), and the contained nutrients contributes to proper development and functioning of the body, and may reduce risk of disease (cardiovascular, cancer, psoriasis, etc.) [13]. Worldwide consumption of fish and other aquatic products tends to increase

According to statistics provided by FAO fish consumption in Romania has been 4 kg/capita/year in 2010 but by 2025 it will reach to 5 kg/capita/year [4], which is highly

lower, Romania being a country with tradition in fish meat consumption. It must be understood which are the reasons for the decline of fish consumption and to which foods have orientated the consumers preferences, and which would be the barriers that would determine the acquisition refusal (price, quality, place of purchase) and fish consumption and products obtained by its processing Research undertaken in the present framework aimed to study the level of awareness and consumption of fish meat, consumers preferences in acquiring the fish and products obtained from its processing on a group of consumers of different ages.

### MATERIAL AND METHODS

It was made a conceptual framework of knowledge and research of fish meat consumption based on some elements of the theory of planned behaviour [1], [2], [6] which take into consideration several ways to study what is the attitude towards consumption of fish meat. To make a correct assessment could be taken into account a number of elements related to the knowledge

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of the benefits of fish consumption of meat, the reasons and barriers, risk, positive or negative feelings encountered when buying fish, the desire to change lifestyle concern for the consumption of healthy food habits, family experience, new knowledge acquired, variety, price, accessibility to the acquisition, the degree of acceptance or cancellation of purchase or consumption due to convenience and some aspects of some of their views, education, etc. Based on these elements was designed a questionnaire submitted to 50 persons of different ages (19-54 years old). Data were processed settling the percentage of participation in the response of 100%. In the first part of the questionnaire respondents had to answer to several general issues related to the level of knowledge and consumption of fish and products obtained from its processing, as well as how many products know: „a lot, many, few, very few”.

In the second part they had to established who purchase aquatic products in the family, having to choose between several assortments (fresh fish, frozen, canned, delicatessen products), on the same assortments who consumes and the frequency consumption (monthly, weekly, occasional, rarely), favourite places for purchasing (from the producers, from the agro-food markets, convenience stores and hypermarkets). The last part of the questionnaire had questions about monthly income and family members.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Following analysis of the survey and responded to each party and the overall context could make a series of observations that eventually led to the formulation of conclusions about the main objectives to be investigated.

Data shown in figure 1 illustrates that from the respondents 96 % prefers to eat fish and only 4% refuses to consume and to buy it. This proves that the benefits of fish consumption are known, being a determinant key in the purchase of fish meat, as shown by other researchers [15] which studied and showed that fish meat consumption produces benefits for human health.

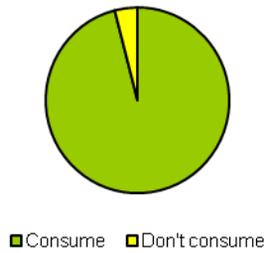


Fig. 1 Statement of fish consumption

The data in figure 2 illustrates which is awareness of fish and different assortments derived from it.

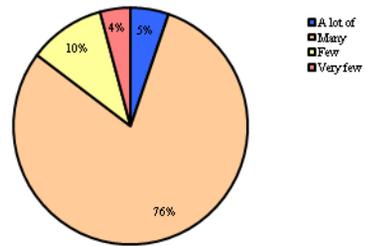


Fig. 2 Statement of awareness of the different assortments of fish from the market

From the respondents 76% know many products and items and consume them as a result and this can be attributed to the fact that regardless of age they want a healthy diet and consume fish, practicing a varied diet [11], and a sense of personal responsibility related to the necessity of eating fish, mainly given knowledge of the qualities and benefits upon the human body [9], [15]; 5% know many assortments, what can be said about these segment is that they know and consume delicatessen which are more expensive; 10% know fewer products, aspect which can be regarded from the point of view that they consume only occasional in family or at the restaurant, not being the ones who decide and purchase products, only 4% knows very few products, certainly falling here persons who do not eat fish. In figure 3 are represented data regarding to those who within the family or when they decide separately buys fish are

fish products, was found that fresh fish is bought in biggest proportions between 50 and 60% when it comes to all family members and adults, followed by frozen fish 25-30%; youngsters prefer to buy fish as canned, also because they are compelled to leave the family, some being students, and their incomes are lower. The fact that adults prefers to buy fish is that elderly peoples aware and take better care of their own health [8], [9], but also their willingness to provide a healthy and varied diet to family members [9], [6], [15].

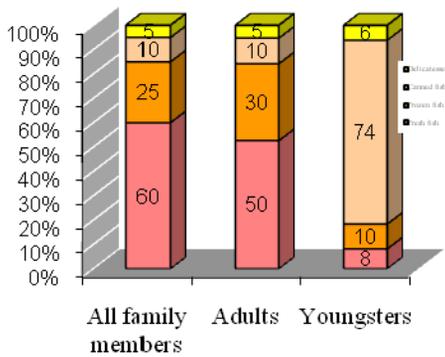


Fig. 3 Statement of awareness of different assortments of fish on the food market

In figure 4 are illustrated the data regarding the frequency of fish consumption. Fish consumption of 18% per week shows that there are persons which take into account a varied and healthy diet.

Monthly consume representing 66% from the respondents, don't meet the experts opinion which recommends fish meat consumption of at least two times a week; 10% are part of those which consume fish depending on the occasion either buy or eat at home or at restaurant, or although they know the benefits of fish consumption are not willingly to cook, preferring a more quickly way to consume foods [12], and the 6% which refuses fish due to possible inconvenience as smell or taste [11]. Therefore it is necessary to make a reorientation at both educational and family through various media through which nutritionists opinion are advertised which could change young people attitudes on

eating fish, this being demonstrated by other researchers [6] [15].

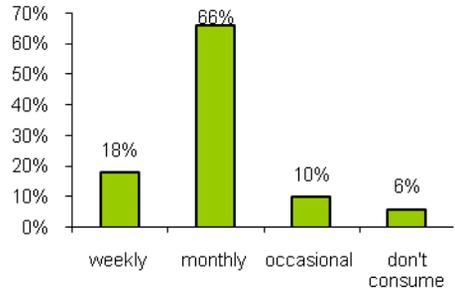


Fig. 4 Statement of fish consumption frequency among respondents

From the questioned consumers 75% prefers buying fresh fish directly from the producers; they usually sell fish immediately after catching and at an acceptable price, the rest of 25% preferring hypermarkets in the idea of food safety. Regarding other products (frozen fish, canned fish, delicatessen) these are mainly bought from hypermarkets 95%, which have specialised rayon's with these kind of products.

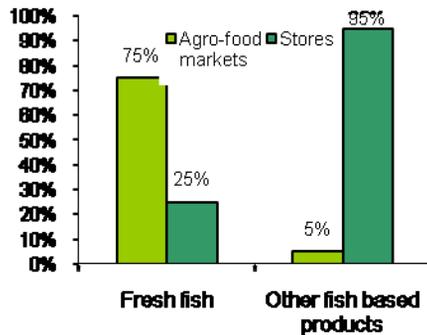


Fig. 5 Statement of consumer preferences regarding the acquisition of fish and other products

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the made studies at the questioned group we can withdraw some conclusions:

1. The benefits of an alimentation based on fish are well known.
2. From the respondents 96% consumes fish and fish products in family and extra-familial;

76 % of them know many fish products and assortments, therefore they consume and 60% prefers to consume fresh fish;

3. Youngsters are tented to buy mainly products obtained by processing especially canned fish;

4. From the questioned consumers 75% prefer to buy fish from agro-food markets directly from the producers.

Studies compared with other research in this field may be the basis for formulating a national strategy for consumer awareness regarding the benefits of fish consumption on human health and finding levers by which to increase consumption of fish per year and per capita at a level much higher than planned and in a much shorter time.

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