

Seafood Foresight: From Managing Information to Facilitating Intelligence

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Abstract

With growing concern over sustainable production, consumption and food security, new risks and uncertainties are emerging for the seafood industry. These arise from diverse sources and multiple levels, including supplies availability, market drivers, NGO pressures, regulation etc. In the face of this, our traditional means of establishing ,what is going on, (periodic forays into industry activity in the form of specific projects) often come up short. These may be suited to stable contexts and simple problems, but seem ill suited to the complex , messes, that often characterise these new dynamic challenges facing the seafood industry. The recognition of wicked problems, and appreciating the world as complex dynamic systems in which local contexts are socially constructed, pose the question, how is appropriate industry action supported where practices are complex and dynamic? This paper explores this question by reviewing the experience of collaborative working across UK seafood, examining North East Scotland and the Humber region as particular cases experiencing issues of supplies availability. It explores the role of shared narrative as a means of capturing lessons learned and shared understanding in dynamic contexts. It considers the potential in communities of practice, as partially nested learning systems, for providing soft infrastructure enabling shared intelligence across networks. Implications for supporting organisations are highlighted. Finally, examining seafood as communities of practice provides the grounding for a seafood foresight programme of engaged research. Such a programme concerns long term frameworks to facilitate the evolution of shared understanding in key seafood systems on a systematic basis.