

POLICY BRIEF

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The future of mussels in Emilia Romagna

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On a global scale, China and the EU represent the two largest producers of mussels with Europe supplying over a third of total production. The overall production of mussels in Europe peaked at nearly 750.000 t/year. The level of consumption is highly variable according to country, but it is mainly concentrated in four countries: Spain, Denmark, Belgium and France. Aquaculture is by far the main source of mussels, responsible for over 90% of total production.

In Italy, the cultivation of mussels is well developed and represents 48% of the total volume of all farmed marine products. Italy is the third main producing country with about 65.000 tonnes produced per year. Installations of mussels are distributed throughout the coastal region, mainly concentrated from Porto Garibaldi to Goro.

In Emilia-Romagna (ER), as well as at the national level, mussels developed in the 80's, with the advent of technologies related to "off-shore" implants. In fact, with the spread of the first breeding facilities since the second half the 80's, ER has reached a considerable technological and productive level. In the Emilia Romagna region, mussel breeding is related to a single species, *Mytilus galloprovincialis*. In 2014, Emilia-Romagna produced 22.200 tonnes of mussels becoming the first region in Italy for mussel production. Emilia-Romagna has become an important location for the manufacturing of company equipment and boats for this activity.

This brief has been developed from research conducted as part of the H2020-funded project, Sufisa. The mussel case study in Emilia Romagna represents a satellite case study. Further details are available from the main project website: <http://www.sufisa.eu/>. The document provides some key messages that summarize the main issues arisen from the study and potential policy implications.

Key messages

- The lack of a logistical system able to coordinate and manage the trade of the production represents a major limitation in the area.



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- Due to the lack of Producer Organizations, commercialization is remarkably difficult. In fact, the main issue for mussel producers is not the production phase but the selling. There is a lack of commercial skills and in turn there is a struggle in placing their product on the market and finding potential clients.
- Sometimes companies committed themselves into emerging markets, mussel varieties cultivated in Italy are not very appreciated in many of the Northern European countries (Netherlands, Sweden, and Denmark) whose preferences are more oriented toward other mussel varieties. In fact, Northern European countries import mussels from Denmark and Ireland. A potential option is to reintroduce mussels cultivated in Italy into existing growing markets in France and South of Spain.
- Italian mussel products suffer from competition in other countries even if the quality sometimes is lower. Consumers are not educated in quality recognition of mussel products and tend to purchase cheaper products over quality. Informing consumers on the quality of mussels would help in protecting local product against competitors from foreign countries.
- Some cooperatives are collaborating with political institutions in an effort to help firms to gain access to convenient form of credit such as bonds and insurance. Insurance is not yet a recognized instrument in this sector due to the lack of reference/information in regards to the level of risk and failure cases.



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