Fish labels as firm’s strategic tools for sustainable aquaculture and traditional fisheries

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1 BACKGROUND

- Over recent years a number of private labels and certification schemes were established to promote sustainable fisheries.
- The fishing industry has been responding to an increasing consumer demand for traceable and sustainable seafood products.
- Eco-labelling schemes can be classified through different approaches such as organic farming, integrated agriculture, regional products, industrial labelling, sustainability certification of natural resources, and fair trade.
- The increasing competition in the seafood market brought producers to adopt differentiation strategies.

2 AIMS

- To present a preliminary analysis on how different context-driven strategies for labelling sustainable seafood products can help achieving common market-oriented performances for both capital-intensive lagoon traditional fishers and fish farmers, as well as improving fisheries and aquaculture sustainability.
- Explore potential options for regional seafood labelling schemes building on existing eco-labelling strategies adopted by local primary producers for retailers.

3 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

- Conditions, Strategies and Performances are interlinked through a dynamic causal mechanism that builds on theories of industrial and organisation economics, focusing on the impacts that decisions have on the performance of the business activities and on the capacity to change structures and conditions of the sector.
- The C-S-P framework was applied to study the business activity of primary producers of fisheries and aquaculture adopting eco-labelling tools in Tuscany.
- A context-specific literature review was carried together with semi-structured interviews with primary producers to explore the strategies related to the choice of two main eco-labelling schemes and the related performances in terms of entering or strengthening the market with big retailers as well as increasing the profitability of the eco-labelled seafood.

4 FINDINGS

- The first findings of this preliminary analysis in Tuscany allowed identifying conditions as well as fish label-related strategies and performances of primary producers.

CONDITIONS

Aquaculture consortium

- Capital-intensive business
- Demand for sustainable labelled fish
- Territorial capital and traditional practices
- Relations with retailers
- Need for business intensification and upscaling

Lagoon fishing cooperative

- Capital-intensive business
- Territorial capital and traditional practices
- Relations with retailers
- Need for business intensification and upscaling

STRATEGIES

- Eco-labelling through transnational Sustainability certifications of natural resources
- Eco-labelling through a Regional product approach

PERFORMANCES

- Achieving medium-high sales prices
- Strengthening business with retailers
- Improving the quality of production process and management
- Increasing the demand
- Fostering sustainability of production methods
- Proving traceability

5 CONCLUSIONS & PERSPECTIVES

- The C-S-P framework, in this preliminary analysis, proved to be a suitable conceptual tool to explore decision-making and strategies of primary producers.
- Sustainability certifications and regional product eco-labels as business strategic tools for conventional marketing to compete in large-scale retailing, targeting high prices.
- Further challenging the framework for exploring the interlinkages feeding back from performances to conditions (such as improving process and management quality).
- Understanding firms’ structure characteristics, their needs, targets and motivations for implementing local and joint private labels or adopting eco-labels.
- What are the outcomes in terms of firm’s resilience and business sustainability for capital-intensive and small-scale primary producers.
- What is the role of wholesalers and big retailers with respect to the demand and development of eco-labels for fish products.

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