

## **Reconnecting the City, the Food and the Sea: the Dutch Fisheries Industry**

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Some of the most successful export products of The Netherlands are produced in the fisheries industry. Dutch Mussels, for example, are famous throughout Western Europe and beyond (e.g. Russia, Dubai and Japan). Other products, such as Plaice (Schol) and Sole (Tong), have been popular food products in many Dutch households for decades. In recent years the situation has become difficult in the fisheries industry however, for many different reasons. Economically, because of increasing fuel prices (the main cost price for businesses) and of increasing international competition of substitutes (e.g. the Asian Tilapia fish). Furthermore, the industry became under public scrutiny because of worries with regard to the production of fish. Examples of worries were (and are) of a shrinking population of fish and damage to the ecosystem due to fishing.

As a result, the industry also received political pressure to change fishing methods and cut production. Summarized, these pressure led to economic hardship in the industry and the exit of several businesses. The decline of the fisheries industry also resulted in social pressure, as particular communities depend to a large degree on the industry, e.g. employment and the 'image' of the region. Consequently, the stakeholders involved in this industry are continuously exploring on how to enhance the (economic) competitiveness of Dutch Fisheries on a sustainable basis.

This project proposes to launch a pilot to reconnect the fishing industry with the society and the sea. The goal is to improve the economic competitiveness of Dutch fishery businesses, while at the same time enhancing its sustainability performance and consolidating its social functions. This project proposes to start a transition path in the fisheries industry by supporting the launch of a so-called 'Multifunctional Fishery'. Inspired by recent developments in Dutch agribusiness, the multifunctional fishery combines production functions with recreation, education and health care. These other activities, when performed professionally, can support both the revenue streams of businesses and the local community. In addition, because fishing will not be the only activity of the business anymore, the pressure on the ecosystem will decrease.

As current profit margins in the industry do not allow business to make large-scale innovation investments themselves, public support is needed to reach these goals. TransForum is generously asked to support the transition of the Multifunctional Fishery with financial and non-financial resources (e.g. knowledge, experience and contacts), towards a financially and environmentally sustainable fisheries industry. So that future generations – both in current and developing markets - can continue to enjoy high-quality, high-added-value Dutch fish, from original and traditional origins.