

WHY AN INTERNATIONAL WOMEN NETWORK IN THE SEAFOOD INDUSTRY IS IMPORTANT?

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Based on statistical observations of the invisibility of women in the seafood industry this presentation advocates the need for setting up an international professional women network. In the seafood industry, not different from others, the success of women does not only depend on what they know but who they know in the industry.

Women are not present in the decision making processes, their participation in local, regional, national leadership is very limited. On the world top 100 biggest seafood companies, women hold 2% of top executive positions such as president, chairperson and CEO, compared to 8% for Fortune 100 companies (USA companies), 3% at 100 FTSE (UK companies). The presentation will include more up-to-date statistics of the kind.

The broad benefits of gender diversity and women friendly organisation have been evidenced recently (Cf. McKinsey's Women Matter), and promoted vividly by broad organisations (United Nations, World Bank, European Commission, etc.). There is agreement that the seafood industry which include primary activities, secondary industries and services related to fisheries and aquaculture, needs to promote women in leadership position, in both the private and public sectors. Their low participation at decision making position is not a question of competences, experiences or legitimacy. Impediments are to be found elsewhere. The seafood industry is not different from others, neither are solutions. Networking is one of them.

Women could wait, as this industry with no doubt will benefit from the general trend. We could as well actively participate to the change and stimulate the transformation. Networking is a one tool that could be re-vitalized. An international women network would work as a platform that will connect professional women of various background and diverse professional levels, offer opportunities of learning exchanges. This network will enhance skills through dedicated seminars/ workshop to develop women skills in different fields, organise summer school, and arrange scholarship for helping young women to attend the above programmes. It may organise mentoring by senior women for junior women.