



The rise and rise of pangasius

 Drew Cherry

Published - September 09, 2010 - 13:28 GMT

Will pangasius be the world's most popular whitefish?



It's hardly surprising pangasius broke into America's top 10 most eaten seafood species in 2009. Everywhere you look -- if you look closely enough -- you'll find the fish, in foodservice catalogues, in the frozen section of retail stores, covered in batter at a fish and chips shop. Though the seafood industry knows all about pangasius, most consumers don't know what they're eating. That may be about to change.

While a few years ago the rocketing growth in pangasius exports was viewed with disdain -- even leading figures in Vietnam said production was growing too fast -- there haven't been any hurdles the fish hasn't overcome.

Read also

- [Inside Japan's 'big three'](#)
- [Pangasius headed to top of U.S. seafood charts?](#)
- [Pangasius breaks into top 10 seafood list](#)

World Wildlife Fund's (WWF) Pangasius Aquaculture Dialogues were recently published, after over three years of work, creating a stringent production standard that will allow pangasius producers to garner an Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) label. The new standards, and WWF's involvement, should be a big boost for the fish's reputation -- the fish's last big challenge.

Birds Eye Iglo's David Graham, one of 600 participants that worked on the new standards, said the new WWF standards should "help enhance consumer confidence in what is still a relatively unfamiliar fish species."

"Relatively unfamiliar" is an understatement. Nobody knows what pangasius is outside the seafood industry. Few companies have openly praised the fish, even as pangasius has added more and more to their bottom lines. But as the WWF standards are met by more and more companies, we will start seeing a lot more seafood companies calling pangasius by its name right on the front of the pack. With the price point being what it is, pangasius gaining a positive reputation among consumers would be a big boost to consumption.

Pangasius can be supplied for seemingly any demand curve. Vietnam's output continues to be astonishing, but other countries are experimenting with production, including China, Thailand and India. Once the fish takes hold in those countries -- and it will -- output is going to grow at a phenomenal rate.

Production of pangasius worldwide reached an estimated 1.6 million metric tons last year. Contrast that with the harvests of the top 10 groundfish species, which in 2009 was only around six million metric tons. Production of pangasius' rival, tilapia, is expected to reach close to three million metric tons worldwide this year, but given that pangasius production was at around 400,000 metric tons just five years ago, it's conceivable output could eclipse the total volume of tilapia production within the next five years.

Linae Foster, QVD marketing manager, told [IntraFish](#) pangasius could break into the top five most consumed species in America within a decade. I agree, and I think we'll see the fish take a similar position in Europe, Russia, Asia and elsewhere.

With improving production methods and new standards to back up quality and environmental responsibility -- I don't see any reason why pangasius wouldn't be the world's No. 1 fish sooner than we might think.

Comments? E-mail: drew.cherry@intrafish.com.

[Print](#)

Copyright 2005 IntraFish Media AS - All rights reserved.

<http://www.intrafish.no/global/news/article276141.ece>