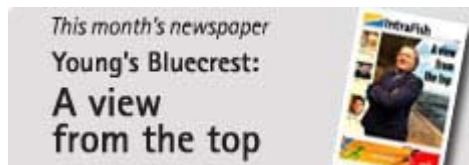




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Market segmentation: A cure for salmon trade wars?

Published - February 18, 2005

Drew Cherry Bergen, Norway: Clear segmentation of the salmon market could avoid costly trade battles in the European Union and elsewhere, according to a recent graduate of a Norwegian Business program.

James Hosea, who along with fellow Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration (NHH) graduate Brynjolfur Eyjolfsson authored a thesis, "Branding Farmed Salmon" on the potential for country-of-origin to act as a value indicator, says that Norway and other salmon producers should look to France for clues on how to segment their market.

"The French have been losing market share with the Chileans, but you don't hear them looking for barriers," he said. "The French don't see Chilean wine as a threat."

Why? Because of a highly-stratified market, Hosea says, that allows consumers to pick and choose what level of quality they want at a given price level. "Consumers know that there's a difference between qualities of wine and they're willing to pay more for some than others."

Scottish and Irish salmon, Hosea says, have already carved out a higher-end niche for themselves, through branding efforts and quality programs like Label Rouge. Norway, however, has not defined its market as clearly.

"If Norway wants to offer a commodity, they should be very clear about this," he said. While that might in the short-term de-value the product, Hosea says, it would put Norwegian salmon out of direct competition with Scotland and Ireland, thus avoiding antidumping and safeguard measures like those they currently face.

In-depth market analysis is needed, Hosea says, to identify how stratified the markets are. "If markets are segmented, then Norway and Chile are not a threat to each other, or to the Scots and the Irish."

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