Investigating changes in acceptance of wild caught Barramundi in the foodservice and hospitality market sectors

Stage 1: Desktop review of existing consumer research

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Date: May 2020

Table of Contents

1. Purpose

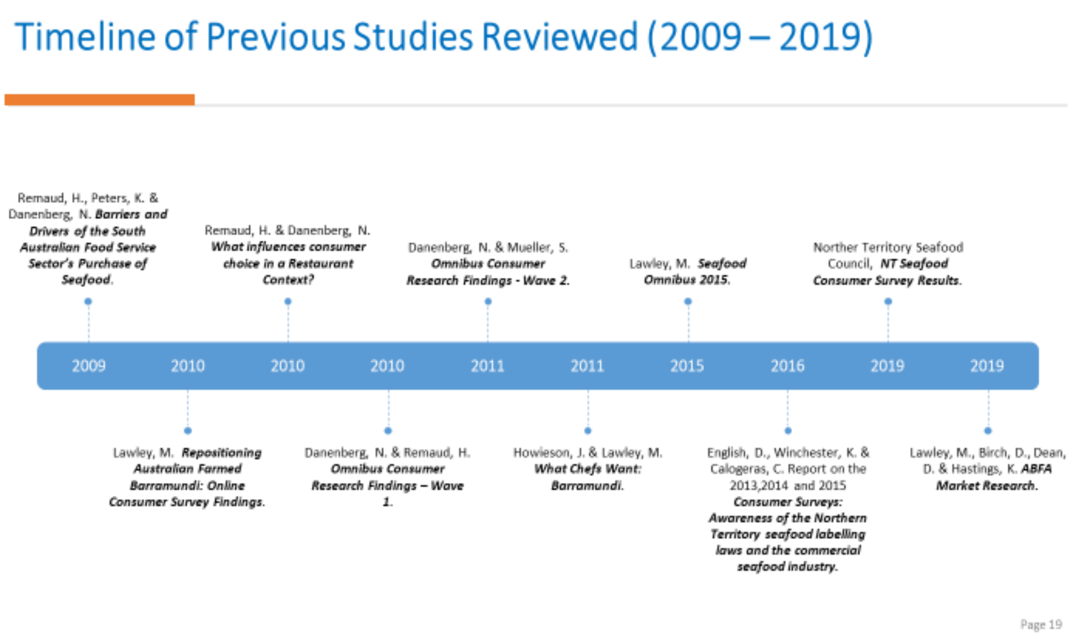
This report reviews previous Seafood CRC and FRDC consumer projects, as well as other publicly available data sets, to identify trends, preferences and attitudes towards wild caught seafood. Specifically, the three Omnibus studies undertaken by the CRC were reviewed for preferences for wild vs farmed and the datasets mined to develop a profile of consumers preferring wild caught. The ABFA have provided permission to use their data set from a recent consumer insight study for farmed barramundi undertaken by Prof Lawley. This approach will enable the project to build a consumer profile with a reasonably high level of confidence and will inform the subsequent research.

2. Method

In addition to all ASCRC reports, FRDC research reports were reviewed for results relevant to the current study. The relevant findings of reports reviewed are summarized by stakeholder group in Appendix 1. Appendix 1 separates the results into three tables. Table 1 focuses on results from research with chefs while Table 2 summarizes the results of consumer studies, specifically focusing on preferences for farmed verses wild caught seafood. Table 3 summarizes a study focusing on consumer choices in restaurants.

The reports cover the timeframe 2009 to 2019 and includes those listed chronologically in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Timeline of Previous Studies Reviewed



3. Summary of Key Points from Desk Research

Chefs.

Previous research highlights that Chefs are time poor so value convenience and also rely heavily on their suppliers for information. The most important criteria chefs' value is consistency of quality. While approximately 25% of chefs buy some seafood direct, they rely heavily on middlemen and suppliers and hence are 'removed' from fishers with no direct communication either way, that is, from chefs to fishers or from fishers to chefs. The supply chain i.e. wholesalers are perceived as gatekeepers who could be providing much better service.

Consumers.

Consumers value 'Australian', rather than distinguishing between farmed vs wild caught, with most consumers ambivalent re farmed verses wild caught. Farmed verses wild caught is not highly important in the overall menu choice decision.

Consumers who prefer wild caught are more likely to be male, Queenslanders, older and more frequent seafood consumers.

Barramundi.

Barramundi appears to be more popular on Qld menus (rather than Sydney) and may be perceived specifically as a 'Queensland/Northern Territory' fish so 'local' in these states as well as Australian.

Wild caught barramundi.

Wild caught barramundi is perceived to be suited to upscale restaurants but even in this setting may be perceived as 'not exotic/exclusive enough'. Wild caught barramundi is seen as suffering from variability in supply, size, price, and availability.

4. Additional Analysis: Australian Seafood campaigns

Two marketing campaigns initially based on research from the ASCRC are noted in this report, Love Australian Prawns and Australian Farmed Barramundi. It should be noted that both campaigns were consumer focused rather than focused on the food service sector.

Love Australian Prawns

This promotional campaign is a collaboration between the Australian Council of Prawn Fishers (ACPF) and the Australian Prawn Farmers Association (APFA) and since 2013. The campaign is funded by voluntary contributions from members of both organizations. A range of collateral including recipe books, posters, cabinet stickers, decals etc. is produced and available to specialist seafood retailers and supermarkets. The campaign is also supported by a website, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram as well as public relations activities.

Of note the campaign focusses on promoting ‘Australian’ and does not distinguish between farmed and wild caught, but rather ‘Australian’ verses imported. Evaluations indicate the LAP ‘brand’ is recognized by 1 in 5 Australians and has had positive impacts in terms of increasing demand for Australian prawns.

Australian Farmed Barramundi – the Dream Fish.

The Australian Barramundi Farmers Association (ABFA). Throughout the CRC the ABFA undertook several projects looking at establishing quality standards and increasing demand for Australian farmed barramundi across all sectors, that is, both consumers and the food service sector. While one project did develop a branding campaign around ‘The Dream Fish’ concept this was not adopted by the ABFA. While the ABFA as an organization has moved forward with quality standards and an associated quality tick, several individual farmers have progressed with developing individual brands including Cone Bay, Humpty Doo and Infinity Blue. In all cases these brands do not mention ‘farmed’. Coral Coast is positioning its brand as ‘sustainable aquaculture’.

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English, D., Winchester, K. & Calogeras, C. 2016, Report on the 2013,2014 and 2015 Consumer Surveys: Awareness of the Northern Territory seafood labelling laws and the commercial seafood industry, Fisheries Research and Development Corporation.

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Remaud, H. & Danenberg, N. 2010. *What influences consumer choice in a Restaurant Context?* SARDI and the UniSA Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science.

Appendix 1 Summary of Previous Studies

Table 1 FOOD SERVICE / CHEFS

Project Year and Title	Method	Findings

2019
ABFA Market Research
	Trade interviews (n = 12)	**Trade**
		• Quality of imports continues to improve adding increased pressure on price
		• Barramundi has become mainstream in Australian pubs and clubs and is now very price sensitive and may be considered ***not exotic enough*** for more up market a la carte menus.
		• Consumers are more sophisticated and able to cook more fish at home – when eating out they may want something they can't create at home
		• Farmed barra preferred for functions (even up market) as need quantity and consistency
		• Wild caught barra up market restaurants due to price
		• Majority of supply chain prefer farmed (chefs up market prefer wild caught)
		• wild caught barra suffer from:
		  • variability in supply
		  • variability in size
		  • price fluctuations
		  • availability – barramundi fishing grounds closed between November and February to allow spawning.

2011
What Chefs Want: Barramundi
	68 Chefs
	18 Brisbane (by phone)
	29 Perth (by mail)
	21 Sydney (by phone)
		• Respondents from restaurants, catering, functions and resorts
		• Majority buy from multiple wholesalers, about 25% buy some seafood direct from producer/fisher (in addition to wholesalers)
		• Most important factor in decision in all locations '***consistency of quality'***
		• 2nd and 3rd important factors varied across locations but included: consistency of supply, relationship with supplier, country of origin and confidence in the origin of the seafood
		• Importance of information sources – dining in other restaurants and suppliers were top two followed by producer events and word of mouth
		• Barramundi (in general) consistently stocked by
		  ○ ***67% of outlets in Brisbane***
		  ○ 50% of outlets in Perth

		○ 30% of outlets in Sydney • Reasons for not stocking ○ Soft flesh, stigma as a tourist fish, not exclusive enough ○ Not a fan, mushy, muddy ○ Not popular at functions (salmon often the preferred fish option) • Preferred format ○ Fillets most preferred Brisbane and Perth ○ Sydney prefer whole fish
2009 Barriers and Drivers of the South Australian Food Service Sector's Purchase of Seafood	• Survey • 65 food purchase decision makers • Food service sector (ie dine in only not takeaway) • South Australia only	• Seasonality important in menu design • 40% of chefs change their menu 4 times a year (seasons) • Optimal 30% of menu is seafood • Seafood perceived as expensive and difficult to work with (ie risky) but very healthy • Consistency of size an issue with seafood • One third of chefs use one supplier for seafood • Multi suppliers used to check prices, greater availability and some suppliers specialise in narrow range • Perception that major suppliers 'controlled seafood' (implication customer service not great) • Tend to be loyal to current suppliers (over 50% using current suppliers for more than 5 years) • Issues with suppliers – limited range and availability, inconsistency of size makes menu planning hard • Barramundi third most popular species (but no differentiation wild vs farmed) • Chefs would value more information about story, a calendar re seasonality • Farmed seafood is perceived as future to deal with above issues • Handling and seafood packaging can be improved throughout the chain • Producers are removed from chefs so don't know what they want • Distributors are gatekeepers – lack of competition and poor customer service • Chefs lack knowledge and skills with seafood • Consumers price sensitive

Table 2 CONSUMERS: Preferences wild caught vs farmed

Project	Method	Findings
2019 ABFA Market Research	1. Consumer Focus groups (2) 2. Consumer survey (n=2061) – some questions replicated from CRC Omnibuses	• Many consumers still do not know or are unsure of Australian vs imported barramundi with majority still associating barramundi with Australia **Perceptual map** • *Imported Barramundi* distinct from caught and farmed and furthest from *Trusted Source* and *Sustainable* • *Australian Farmed Barramundi* closest to *Light Flavour*, Sustainable, and *Everyday Meal* • *Australian Wild Barramundi* closest to *Smells Fresh*, *Pleasing Texture* & *Tastes Great* • Analyse for profile wild caught vs farmed vs no preference • See summary Table below
2019 NT Consumer Survey	Online consumer survey N=431	• consumers respond positively to seafood labelling that provides them with origin information to assist in making informed decisions about their seafood purchases; • consumers have a strong preference for local NT seafood and are prepared to pay a premium for NT seafood product; • after freshness, origin labelling are key decisions makers when purchasing seafood; • the NT commercial fishing industry is seen to deliver a range of benefits to the community; • consumer awareness of the labelling • laws requires a direct and clear message and ongoing education, possibly with more explicit legislation to identify the specific country source of seafood product • consumer awareness and familiarisation of the NT Seafood Council and the 'Support NT Caught' campaign has increased; • consolidating and building on a range of media/extension opportunities have led to a steady increase in consumer knowledge of the labelling laws and 'Support NT Caught' campaign (i.e. social media platforms). Notwithstanding this significant opportunity to build 'word of month' should continue; and • NT Seafood Council and the 'Support NT Caught' campaign should continue

		• to explore and adapt the communication streams to ensure growth and a wider community awareness. • (NB current NT legislation only requires identification of non-Australian seafood as being 'imported');
2016 NT Consumer Surveys	Consumer surveys in 2013,2014 and 2015 2013 n = 649 2014 n=602 2015 n=438	• consumers respond positively to seafood labelling that provides them with origin information to assist in making informed decisions about their seafood purchases • consumers have a strong preference for local NT seafood and are prepared to pay a premium for that product • after freshness, origin labelling, were key decisions makers when purchasing seafood • the NT commercial fishing industry is seen to deliver a range of benefits to the community • strengthening consumer awareness and an improved understanding of the labelling laws can be seen and this can be attributed to targeted clear and direct messaging • consumer awareness of the labelling laws required a direct and clear message and ongoing education, possibly with more explicit legislation to identify the specific country source of seafood product (NB current NT legislation only requires identification of non-Australian seafood as being 'imported') • consumer awareness and familiarisation of the NT Seafood Council and the 'Support NT Caught' campaign has increased largely due to online media streams. Notwithstanding this media, significant opportunity to build 'word of mouth' should continue • consolidating and building on a range of media/extension opportunities have led to a steady increase in consumer knowledge of the labelling laws and 'Support NT Caught' campaign (i.e. social media platforms, word of mouth and TV). • NT Seafood Council and the 'Support NT Caught' campaign should continue to explore and adapt the communication streams to ensure growth and a wider community awareness.
2015 Seafood Omnibus 2015	• Online survey of 2538 consumers over 18 (same criteria as 2009 and 2011 Omnibuses)	• In 2015 (as compared to 2009) there was a decrease in preference for both wild caught and farmed seafood and an increase in consumers who did not have a preference for either • Respondents were also asked why they preferred wild – top 2 reasons were 'tastes better' and 'more natural' – less frequently cites reasons of health and nutrition increased slightly from 2009 to 2015

<table>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compared results of 2009 Omnibus (question not asked in 2011)</td>
<td>Main reason respondents preferred farmed was concern re overfishing and depletion of environment – no bycatch and consistent taste increased from 2009 to 2015
Wild-caught vs farmed was the least important factor when purchasing seafood in a restaurant/café/takeaway behind freshness, how cooked, price, support Australian seafood industry, species, country of origin, sustainable fishery and region of origin.
<table>
<tr><th>Preference</th><th>2009 % n = 1922</th><th>2015 % n = 1174</th><th>2019 % n = 2061</th></tr>
<tr><td>Farmed</td><td>10</td><td>7</td><td>10</td></tr>
<tr><td>Wild caught</td><td>41</td><td>34</td><td>39</td></tr>
<tr><td>No preference</td><td>49</td><td>60</td><td>51</td></tr>
</table>
Over 20% of respondents assume all ‘barramundi’ is Australian and do not realise 70% of barramundi sold in Australian is imported. ‘Australian’ is more important than farmed verses wild caught.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010
Repositioning Australian Farmed barramundi: Online Consumer Survey</td>
<td>Online survey n = 899 Australians over 18 consumed finfish in past 3 months and responsible or jointly responsible for shopping</td>
<td>Consumers overwhelmingly prefer ‘Australian’ over imported (but often do not realise)
Preference farmed verses wild statements % agreeing
More likely to purchase wild caught rather than farmed barra 64.2%
Prepared to pay more for the assurance fish is wild caught…………….58.9%
Prepared to pay more for assurance farmed………………………………32.8%
Farmed barra is better quality than wild caught barra……………………32.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010
Omnibus 1</td>
<td>Online survey n = 2643 Australians over 18 who are responsible or jointly responsible for shopping
Data gathered in December 2009</td>
<td>Importance of farmed vs wild caught (overall)
Measured on 10 point scale – mean 5.9/10 (so not highly important)
Females tended to rate more highly than males (6.1 for females cf 5.6 for males)
Of those who ranked importance at 6 or greater out of 10 – 50% preferred wild, 12% farmed and 38% no preference
Of those who ranked importance lower – 22% preferred wild, 7% farmed and 72% no preference
ACT respondents rated issue of lower importance than other states</td>
</tr>
</table>

		• Importance tends to increase with age • Those with children under 12 tended to rate as lower than those without children at home • Importance decreases as income increases • Importance increases as frequency of seafood consumption increases **Differences in preference for wild caught vs farmed** • Despite rating issue as more important, females are more likely to have no preference for farmed vs wild caught • Males are more likely to prefer wild caught • Queenslanders are more likely to prefer wild caught • South Australians are more likely to prefer farmed • Preference for wild caught increases with age • Those with children under 12 prefer farmed • Stronger preference for wild caught as frequency of seafood consumption increases
2011 Omnibus 2		Wild verses farmed was not addressed in this study

Table 3 Consumers choice in restaurants

Project	Method	Findings
2010 What influences consumer choice in a Restaurant Context?	• Australia • FG and survey • 1208 restaurant patrons • Both casual and fine dining	• Consumers see seafood as being less versatile and a 'special occasion' dish compared to meat – but healthier and lower in fat • Fine dining = pleasure • Casual dining = value for money • Local produce and a healthy option were more important at fine dining • Consumers are willing to pay incrementally more as variations are added to a baseline dish