

Live brown shrimp (*Crangon crangon* L.) as an innovative high-value product in the Flemish shrimp fishery

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The North Sea brown shrimp fishery is economically very important, with the main consumer market located in Belgium. The small Belgian fleet however only contributes to a small extend in the total production of the European Union and still operates in a very traditional way. The shrimp are cooked on the ship immediately after trawling and brought to land as a readily consumable product. Reduced catches and a relatively low price for cooked shrimp in recent years have stimulated the Belgian fishermen to seek out new ways to valorise their product. An innovative concept to achieve this goal is to keep the shrimp alive in a similar way as what is already common practice for lobsters and crabs. This has never been achieved for brown shrimp before, mainly due to a high mortality and the absence of expertise in keeping the shrimp alive for market applications. Living brown shrimp are currently being developed as a new niche-product for the Belgian market and targets specialised restaurants and resellers who wish to diversify their offer. A successful method for keeping the shrimp alive under optimal conditions is currently under investigation. Survival and growth are continuously monitored in a live stocking system and several parameters such as temperature, stocking density, exposure to light and food availability are tested. Preliminary experiments have already shown that multiple causes of mortality can be identified. Solving the issues that affect the survival of the brown shrimp in a controlled environment could create new opportunities for the exploitation of this high-value product for the Belgian market, ultimately resulting in the stimulation of a more sustainable and profitable fishery in the North Sea.