

SPOTLIGHT

MSC hires consultant to sharpen its image

Michael Barker

The Marine Stewardship Council is planning a global promotional push to boost consumer recognition of its sustainability message.

MSC is being partnered in its venture by Saatchi & Saatchi S, a global sustainability consultancy set up this year. The consultancy, an offshoot of Saatchi & Saatchi Worldwide, will analyse all aspects of the MSC brand and look at ways it could better promote itself to consumers around the world.

The global nature of the seafood industry and fish consumption mean an international approach was needed, according to the MSC. Saatchi & Saatchi S will initially look to 'define' the brand and turn the concept into something more meaningful for shoppers, said



The MSC logo may get new look

Simon Hathaway, chief executive of Saatchi & Saatchi X, which focuses on understanding shopper attitudes. A redesign of the MSC logo has not been ruled out.

The brand analysis is expected to be complete by June, after which the MSC will present the findings to retailers and discuss what more can be done to promote the concept.

The strong support given by UK retailers to sustainable sourcing made this country an ideal place to start, said Hathaway, but there were other countries

offering a "stunning" opportunity for growth such as Japan and the US, where huge volumes of fish were eaten.

The number of products carrying the MSC logo, having achieved full chain-of-custody certification, has doubled in the past year to 1,300. Consumer concerns about health and the environment were the key drivers behind the rising popularity of sustainably sourced fish, said Hathaway.

However, there were still challenges, said Simon Edwards, MSC global marketing and communications director. These included changing consumers' traditional buying habits and the MSC's limited funds for promotion.

Much of Saatchi & Saatchi S's work will be carried out for free, with MSC covering expenses and research costs.



Wild boar is attracting major retailer interest as an unusual product that is low in cholesterol and big on flavour, as Simon Gaskell, owner of the Real Boar Company, explains

Keeping wild boar is very different from pig farming. We have 150-200 animals of German and Polish stock in a 20-acre wood on our smallholding in the Cotswolds, and they revert to being wild very quickly. The stud boars have three-inch tusks that self-sharpen, making my wellies like colanders, but they are charming if unruly animals.

It takes 18 months from birth to slaughter of the boarlets, compared with six months for pigs. We try to sell the loins, haunches and whole carcasses fresh to order.

We also wanted a value-added product with a longer shelf life so we could control supply, and that led to what I believe is the only English wild boar salami grown and produced in the UK. It has appeared on the menu at The Fat Duck and The Waterside at Bray, and has been served by The Cinq Restaurant at George V in Paris, who couldn't believe it had been made by an Englishman.

It sells in big sizes for slicing, or in presentation tubes as gifts and also in pre-sliced vacuum packs. Shelf life is up to six months, and we supply farm shops and delis. We are talking to a major retailer, and River Cottage has just ordered some.

I studied agriculture and have kept pigs before, but was working in event management in Australia when I decided to come back to do something slightly different with an animal I love and a small acreage of woodland.

We started with two 'sounders' (families of wild boar) totalling 30 sows in 2004 and have now been selling our wild boar meat for two years. The salamis started in 2006, when we sold 70, and that has risen to 700 between July and December last year, and now stands at up to 50 a week. Our 400g and 800g salamis retail for between £11 and £23. We also have a Wild Boar and Venison Salami with Red Wine, and a Wild Boar Chorizo with Red Wine, and a cold smoked wild boar ham.

We are very aware this is a niche market and not an everyday meat, and being slow-growing it is more expensive. But it is very healthy, having a fat content of 5.2g per 100g compared with 22.5g for pork. Saturated fat content is 2.9g compared with 8.3g for pork.

The animals live in a natural environment, feeding on acorns, fungi, roots, cherries and seeds, supplemented with local potatoes and sow conditioner pignuts.

You need an annual Dangerous Wild Animals licence to keep wild boar, and to invest in security-type fencing with hot wires and a handling yard.

Valentines push lifts red meat sales

A promotion to boost sales of Quality Standard beef and lamb around Valentines Day achieved a 4.3% redemption rate among consumers, well above the 2% anticipated for such initiatives.

The 'It takes 2' promotion encouraged shoppers to cook a Valentines Day meal using beef or lamb carrying the Eblex Quality Standard mark. The initiative ran in 300 Tesco and Asda stores.

"This promotion tapped into the annual interest surrounding Valentines Day and not only increased sales of Quality Standard beef and lamb in-store but drove significant traffic to the Eblex consumer website," said Chris Leeman, retail project manager for Eblex.

Dunnes picketed by furious pig farmers

Angry pig farmers have accused supermarkets in the Irish Republic of killing their industry and driving them into bankruptcy through loss-leader offers.

The Irish Farmers' Association mounted a picket on the main Dublin store of Dunnes at the height of the Easter rush. The farmers claim they have lost €25 on every pig sold in the past eight months and their €400m-a-year industry is on the point of collapse.

Tesco, Dunnes, Musgrave, Superquinn, Aldi and Lidl "have the industry in a stranglehold", said IFA president Padraig Walshe. The average pig farmer had built up losses of €100,000, he told demonstrators. "The



Dunnes and other multiples 'have farmers in stranglehold'

evidence is to be found in the papers every week with discounted pigmeat and half-price offers used as headline grabbers to pull in customers."

However, Retail Ireland, which represents the multiples, claimed special offers demonstrated tough competition and insisted the cost was not being borne by the farmers.