

A PRINCIPLE-BASED EXAMINATION OF THE ‘ALTERNATIVENESS’ OF THE FFAW SEAFOOD TRACEABILITY PROJECT IN NEWFOUNDLAND

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The globalized and industrialized nature of conventional fisheries has led to significant issues in terms of ecosystem health, as well as threatening the sustainability of rural coastal communities and culture in Newfoundland. In an attempt to enhance the viability of inshore, small-boat fisheries, the Fish, Food and Allied Worker’s Union (FFAW) developed a seafood traceability project that has created opportunities for harvesters to build relationships with consumers and enhance the local market for Newfoundland fish and seafood. While there are significant policy barriers that have restricted the inclusion of fish in the local food system, and the FFAW traceability initiative has created significant opportunities in enhancing the access and availability of locally harvested fish in Newfoundland. This paper is founded in the interactive governance perspective, and examines the governing principles of the seafood traceability project in order to assess how they deviate from those related to conventional fisheries, and the opportunities and limitations of developing fisheries alternative food networks (AFNs). Alternative food networks (AFNs) provide a means to address these wide-ranging socio-economic, environmental and cultural issues of conventional food production. The key governing principles of the FFAW traceability initiative are contrasted with those expressed by ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ AFNs, and with the governing principles of the dominant seafood sustainability label, the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). The study finds that the FFAW traceability initiative is similar to ‘strong’ AFNs in terms of supporting social and environmental sustainability, yet engages in a highly globalized supply chain, as is the case with the MSC and ‘weak’ AFNs.