

## WSI: Enough talk, time for action on gender equality in seafood

By Neil Ramsden



Lorenzo, Toussaint, Monfort, Marz's Gudrunardottir, and Gonzalez. Credit: WSI

**Women in the Seafood Industry (WSI) made its first public appearances as an organization in September, first at the World Seafood Congress (WSC) and then at the Icefish trade show – both in Reykjavik, Iceland.**

The latter event also saw WSI display a stand; the first time a women's association has done so at a professional fisheries fair, WSI president and co-founder Marie-Christine Monfort told to Undercurrent News.

In conjunction with the University of Vigo's school of business and economic studies, WSI invited three young women from the Spanish seafood sector to attend the two events, as Monfort put it, "to be a part of the game". Mariana Toussaint, a consultant with the Food and Agriculture Organization; Sofia Lorenzo Paramos, with Nueva Pescanova; and Carmen Gonzalez, project manager with startup and innovation incubator Fishing Accelerator each told Undercurrent the experience had been invaluable.

"We've met some great examples of women in top roles, and we've found them really inspiring," said Gonzalez. "The networking opportunity has been perfect for meeting new people and learning about the roles that are out there." "We've met some women here who just show what you can achieve, if you don't give up," added Lorenzo. They had just finished a meeting with Erla Bjorg Gudrunardottir, managing director of Marz Seafood – an Icelandic sales firm run entirely by women.

They are backing WSI's call for action when it comes to gender equality in seafood. "There's been a lot of writing, plenty of talk around the subject," Monfort noted. "But talk hasn't really affected the industry." "Things might be changing and slowly improving, but it's the careers of these young women which suffer if the opportunities aren't there; we need a more rapid change."

A trade show is a good place to start, she suggested, as of course the networking and learning opportunities are numerous. All too often too, the few women appearing at such events are there

just to welcome customers to the stand; an illustration of how few women there are in the top roles throughout seafood.

WSI worked with Iceland's Matis to make WSC 2017 an event with an unusually high number of female speakers. Monfort is already speaking with the organizers of WSC 2019, to be held in Penang, Malaysia, to try and make this less unusual. "Most public sector decision influencing the seafood industry are taken in a very gender blind way, which means they can adversely impact on a large number of people – namely women," said Monfort. "We want to raise awareness of women's role in seafood, and make sure policymakers consider all the impacts of their decisions."

At Icefish, and possibly also at Conxemar in Vigo, Oct. 3 and 4, WSI was collecting survey data on the role of women in seafood, and awareness of said roles. This information will feed into WSI's board decisions due in the fall as to what its next steps are, said Monfort.

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