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## IMPROVING MARKETING STRATEGIES OF UKRAINIAN FISH PRODUCT MANUFACTURERS: RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROSPECTS

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This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the current state of marketing strategies employed by Ukrainian fish product manufacturers in the context of domestic challenges and dynamic transformations in the global fish market. It has been established that the national aquaculture and fisheries sector is currently characterized by a low level of integration of modern marketing tools, which undermines the effectiveness of positioning Ukrainian products both in domestic and international markets.

One of the key issues identified is the underdevelopment of strategic branding, the absence of a stable system of consumer communication, and the limited use of digital distribution and promotion channels. Most enterprises operate within narrow local markets without a consistent marketing policy focused on long-term development.

To deepen the research, leading international practices were analyzed, including those of countries with advanced fisheries sectors such as Germany, Poland, the United States, and China. It was found that the success of these countries largely stems from the implementation of innovative approaches to fish product promotion, extensive use of ecological marketing elements, and effective interaction between producers, retail chains, and state institutions. Special attention is paid to the development of cooperative business models, certification of quality and ecological origin, and the creation of sustainable brands with high consumer loyalty.

Based on the conducted analysis, a set of practical recommendations is proposed to enhance the marketing activities of Ukrainian producers. These include the formation of local branding systems, the development of online sales and social media as communication channels with consumers, the support of cooperatives among small producers, and a focus on environmentally friendly, certified products.

The study substantiates the prospects for developing a comprehensive system for promoting Ukrainian fish products that can meet the growing demands of domestic consumers and strengthen competitiveness in international markets—an especially important factor in the context of European integration and trade liberalization.

Keywords: fish product marketing; aquaculture; branding; export; consumer preferences; digital distribution channels; international market; competitiveness; cooperation; ecological certification; marketing strategies; Ukrainian fisheries sector.

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**Problem statement.** In the current context of intense competition in agri-food markets and growing demand for high-quality, safe, and environmen-

tally sustainable products, the issue of effective marketing of fish products has become particularly relevant. Ukrainian fish producers, especially aquaculture enterprises, face numerous barriers—including low brand recognition, limited access to external markets, underdeveloped consumer communication, and weak integration of digital technologies in distribution processes. As a result, there is an urgent need to improve marketing strategies that can enhance product competitiveness, expand distribution channels, and build a positive image of the Ukrainian fish sector both domestically and internationally.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Issues related to marketing in the agricultural sector and aquaculture trade have been addressed by both Ukrainian and foreign scholars, including V. Yu. Kharchuk, S. I. Melnychenko, and O. H. Shevchuk, as well as in reports by the FAO, OECD, and the World Bank. Their work highlights general trends in the development of the fish market, approaches to improving production efficiency, and the foreign trade performance of enterprises. However, most studies focus primarily on the macroeconomic level, while the aspect of strategic marketing – particularly branding, digitalization, and consumer behavior—remains insufficiently explored. There is a clear need to systematize existing approaches, adapt international experience to Ukrainian conditions, and formulate practical recommendations for the effective promotion of fish products [5].

**Objective.** The purpose of this study is to substantiate directions for improving marketing strategies of Ukrainian fish product manufacturers, taking into account current challenges, changes in consumer preferences, and international practices. To achieve this goal, the following tasks are set: to analyze the current state of the Ukrainian fish market and identify marketing weaknesses of producers; to examine successful fish product promotion strategies in foreign countries (EU, USA, China) and assess their potential for adaptation; to formulate proposals for improving digital distribution channels, local branding, producer cooperation, and ecological product positioning; to determine the prospects for enhancing the competitiveness of Ukrainian fish products in the global market through the implementation of modern marketing approaches.

**Research results.** Marketing in the fish industry has been covered in numerous studies, yet in Ukraine this topic has not received sufficient scholarly attention. Ukrainian authors (I. Lahutin, O. Korin, M. Pugachov) mostly focus on general issues of agromarketing, with limited emphasis on the specifics of the fish product market. Their research identifies that the weak market orientation of fish production enterprises is caused by deficient marketing policies, a low share of branded products, underdeveloped distribution channels, and limited use of digital promotion tools.

Foreign studies (notably by K. Anderson, S. Tveterås, and T. Bjørndal) emphasize the importance of product differentiation strategies, a focus on sus-

tainable development, and value creation through branding and certification. In the EU and North America, marketing strategies in the fish sector are largely based on detailed analysis of consumer preferences, trends in healthy eating, and environmental standards. Considerable attention is paid to service quality, packaging, logistics, and digital communication.

These studies underscore the gap between Ukrainian realities and contemporary global marketing practices, which highlights the need for systematic improvement of domestic producers' strategies.

Ukraine's fish sector is an integral part of the agri-food complex and features a well-developed, though unevenly distributed, production structure covering the full cycle—from harvesting and farming to processing, storage, and distribution of ready-to-consume fish products. In the context of rising demands for food safety and quality, the sector serves not only as a source of essential protein resources for the domestic market, but also as a potentially export-oriented industry.

The main production areas remain inland fisheries in freshwater bodies, as well as fishing in the Black and Azov Seas, and the aquaculture sector, which has shown positive development dynamics due to restrictions on marine fish capture and the need for stable supplies. Since 2014, following the annexation of Crimea and the loss of part of the maritime coast, the national fish industry has undergone significant transformations: the focus has shifted to inland waters, pond farming, and the development of intensive cultivation systems (e.g., basin and recirculating aquaculture systems).

At present, the priority objects of aquaculture in Ukraine are traditional freshwater fish species—carp, silver carp, and grass carp—which dominate the commodity structure of production. There is a growing interest in the cultivation of predatory species such as pike-perch, pike, and perch, as well as premium products like trout, sturgeon, and African catfish (*Clarias*).

At the regional level, the key centers of production are located in Dnipropetrovsk, Cherkasy, Kyiv, Poltava, Volyn, and Odesa regions. The processing infrastructure is mainly concentrated in the southern part of the country. At the same time, the market remains highly dependent on imports, particularly of marine fish and seafood, which puts pressure on domestic producers and underscores the need for competitive marketing strategies.

Table 1 provides a summary analysis of the main characteristics of the current structure of Ukrainian fish production.

This analytical information forms the foundation for further assessment of the current state of marketing strategies used by Ukrainian producers, which must be adapted to the evolving market environment and aligned with the needs of targeted consumer groups.

**Table 1. Analysis of the Structure and Specifics of Fish Product Manufacturing in Ukraine**

Indicator / Direction	Characteristics
Main sectors	Industrial fishing, aquaculture, processing
Geographic concentration	Central (Dnipropetrovsk, Cherkasy), Southern (Odesa) regions
Popular aquaculture species	Carp, silver carp, grass carp, pike-perch, trout, sturgeon
Import dependence	High (marine fish, seafood)
Domestic production potential	High in the freshwater fish segment
Key challenges	Competition from imports, weak branding, limited modernization
Prospects	Development of niche products, focus on quality, sustainability, and locality

At the same time, Ukraine's domestic market remains significantly dependent on imported fish products, particularly marine species such as herring, mackerel, and cod, as well as seafood such as shrimp, squid, and mussels—mostly imported from EU countries, Iceland, Norway, and China. This situation presents significant challenges for domestic producers, who are forced to compete not only in terms of price, but also in quality, service, and marketing. Consequently, it reinforces the necessity of revising current approaches to the marketing positioning of Ukrainian fish products and implementing innovative sales strategies tailored to modern consumer expectations.

Special attention should be paid to marketing practices within the small and medium-sized business (SMB) segment of Ukraine's fishery sector. SMBs play a crucial role in the structure of the national fish industry, providing flexibility, adaptability, and regional coverage of production and distribution processes. Representatives of this segment typically include family farms, private enterprises, sole proprietorships, and cooperatives focused on fish cultivation, processing, or sales. However, most of these entities operate under conditions of limited financial, human, and technological resources, which directly affects their capacity to apply systematic marketing approaches.

While large enterprises possess significantly broader resources for planning and implementing comprehensive marketing strategies, most small producers rely primarily on intuitive, local, or situational methods of product promotion. This creates a notable gap between them in terms of brand recognition, market entry, consumer interaction, and product positioning (Table 2).

Below is a illustrating the specific features of small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) in the field of fish product marketing in Ukraine (Table 3). It provides a structured overview of both internal characteristics (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats) influencing the effectiveness of marketing strategies in this segment.

**Table 2. Comparative Table of Marketing Practices Between SMBs and Large Enterprises in Ukraine's Fishery Sector**

Criterion	Small and Medium-Sized Businesses (SMBs)	Large Enterprises
Main sales channel	Direct sales at markets, fairs, via social media	Retail chains, supermarkets, HoReCa, exports
Branding level	Minimal or absent	Established brands with recognizable image
Digital marketing tools	Basic (social media, messengers)	Professional SMM, SEO, websites, online stores
Participation in exhibitions	Regional fairs and expos	National and international forums
Market segmentation	Absent or elementary	Based on research and consumer behavior analysis
Advertising investment	Very limited	Regular budgets for marketing campaigns
Packaging and labeling	Simple or non-branded	Certified, branded packaging
Customer communication	Personal interaction, social media	Omnichannel platforms and CRM systems

**Table 3. SWOT Matrix of Small and Medium-Sized Businesses in Fish Product Marketing**

Strengths	Weaknesses
Flexibility and adaptability to local demand	Limited marketing knowledge and strategic planning capacity
Direct customer engagement and trust	Low investment in branding and advertising
Regional and niche product specialization	Weak digital presence and outdated promotion methods
Potential for product authenticity and locality	Lack of certification and professional packaging
Opportunities	Threats
Growth in demand for local and eco-friendly food	High competition from imports and large producers
Development of short supply chains and cooperatives	Regulatory burdens and lack of support infrastructure
Digitalization and e-commerce expansion	Consumer preference for recognized brands
Access to international technical assistance	Market volatility and economic instability

**Analyzing the provided matrix**, it can be argued that the key competitive advantage of SMBs lies in their adaptability, proximity to the consumer, and the potential for local branding. However, leveraging these strengths requires overcoming a range of internal constraints and capitalizing on external opportunities—through digital transformation, organizational cooperation, and improved marketing literacy.

Despite some development dynamics, the marketing strategies of Ukrainian fish producers remain vulnerable to a number of systemic issues that hinder

the formation of a competitive environment within the industry. The main barriers include:

- Low level of marketing competence. Most small and medium-sized enterprises lack dedicated marketing professionals and the knowledge necessary to independently develop effective communication and sales strategies. This results in weak interaction with both consumers and the broader market environment.

- Limited access to key sales channels. Due to a shortage of modern logistics infrastructure, refrigeration and packaging equipment, and a lack of established partnerships, products from small producers rarely reach national retail chains, the HoReCa sector, or specialized eco-stores.

- Low level of brand positioning. Products are often sold without proper labeling, packaging, or brand concept, which makes them less appealing compared to imported alternatives.

- Limited financial resources. Implementing marketing strategies requires capital investment, but most SMBs lack access to stable financing. Credit in the sector is offered at high interest rates, while state support programs remain fragmented and unpredictable.

- Regulatory challenges. The national legal framework for aquaculture and fish processing needs significant improvement. Complicated certification procedures, permitting processes, and product accounting hinder business legalization and expansion.

- Strong competition from imported products. Imported fish often benefits from economies of scale, lower production costs, and advanced marketing campaigns tailored to retail consumers.

Collectively, these factors create an unfavorable environment for the development of effective marketing in the sector and require comprehensive governmental, educational, and institutional support to unlock the potential of national producers.

International experience demonstrates a wide diversity of models for organizing fish production, logistics, and product promotion in both domestic and international markets. Notably, the most systematic approaches are observed in countries with advanced aquaculture sectors—such as China, Norway, and Chile—where fish production is integrated into global agri-food value chains. Common features of these models include the presence of national fishery development strategies; strict quality and traceability control; the implementation of innovative logistics solutions (cold chain, RFID, blockchain); and support for small producers through cooperatives or integration with processors.

Norway, as an example of the European model, focuses on high value-added products—particularly premium salmon varieties exported to over 100 countries. A high level of state support, including infrastructure subsidies and

environmental licensing, creates favorable conditions for sustainable development. China, in contrast, demonstrates a model of intensive aquaculture with an emphasis on scale and self-sufficiency, while actively promoting exports through logistical advantages and price flexibility. In the United States and Canada, oceanic fishing is combined with deep processing and strong support for local consumption through “buy local” programs.

For Ukraine, which possesses substantial aquatic and biological resources, the following adaptation directions are particularly relevant (Table 4):

**Table 4. International Practices in Fish Product Production and Export and Their Adaptation Potential in Ukraine**

Country	Key Practices	Adaptation Opportunities for Ukraine
Norway	Government support for exporters, environmental certification (ASC), specialized logistics hubs	Introduction of HACCP/ASC certification; creation of export-logistics centers in fishery regions
China	Large-scale aquaculture, domestic market orientation, subsidies for technology	Development of freshwater aquaculture; co-financing programs for cultivation technologies
Chile	Export-oriented processing (fish, fishmeal), integrated production clusters	Creation of production clusters in the Azov and Danube regions
USA / Canada	Support for the local market, digitalized tracking and sales, "buy local" programs	Implementation of online sales platforms; local branding to support domestic producers
Netherlands / Italy	Cooperative models of production and marketing	Establishment of marketing cooperatives for fishers and farmers with state support
Japan	Product traceability, labeling, traditional craftsmanship combined with modern service	Introduction of QR coding; promotion of cultural elements in fish tourism

- Institutionalization of aquaculture as an export-oriented sector through the adoption of a national strategy supporting freshwater fish farming and the creation of preferential conditions for certification according to EU standards (e.g., HACCP, ASC).

- Development of cooperative models as an alternative to large-scale enterprises—by uniting small producers into marketing or production associations, following models applied in the Netherlands or Italy.

- Investment in logistics infrastructure, particularly in regions with high concentrations of fishery enterprises (e.g., Kherson, Chernivtsi, and Volyn oblasts), including cold storage facilities, pre-processing stations, and access to railway hubs.

- Expansion of digital integration through the implementation of online trading platforms, QR-code labeling for product origin verification, and integration into international electronic exchanges.



Taking into account global market trends—especially the increasing demands for transparency, sustainable resource use, and traceability – it is advisable for Ukrainian producers to align with standards and technologies that provide not only a competitive advantage but also long-term ecological and social sustainability.

Even in the absence of substantial financial resources, Ukraine has the potential for gradual adaptation of effective international practices. Key directions include the modernization of production facilities, digitalization of tracking and logistics systems, and the development of cluster and cooperative infrastructure – all of which will contribute to enhancing the global competitiveness of Ukrainian fish products.

Thus, international experience demonstrates the high effectiveness of a comprehensive approach to fishery sector development, one that combines state support, modern technologies, producer cooperation, and digital solutions. For Ukraine, the priority is not to mechanically copy foreign models, but rather to adapt selected elements to the local context—considering the country’s natural resource potential, institutional constraints, and domestic market conditions. The phased implementation of certification systems, logistics modernization, transparent tracking, and the formation of export-oriented clusters could form the foundation of a long-term strategy for the competitive development of Ukraine’s fish product sector.

In the current context, considering the destabilization of the agri-food sector caused by full-scale war, global competition, and shifting consumer behavior, Ukraine’s fishery sector requires a significant update in marketing approaches. Taking into account the strategic development directions outlined in the *“Strategy for Agricultural Development of Ukraine until 2030”*, it is crucial to adapt marketing strategies to the demands of the digital economy, growing demand for healthy food, and export expansion. Accordingly, there is a need to develop an integrated marketing strategy that aligns with current market conditions and ensures the competitiveness of Ukrainian fish products.

Marketing strategies should be based on clear product positioning. Positioning by quality and freshness criteria represents a key competitive advantage for Ukrainian producers. Due to shorter logistics chains, Ukrainian producers are able to guarantee minimal time between harvesting or farming and product delivery, which aligns with European consumers' expectations for "fresh products." Environmental and local positioning are also important and can be implemented through brand creation based on the geographical origin of the product. This aligns with the principles of Geographical Indications (GI), widely applied in the EU and partially supported in Ukraine through programs for small-scale producers such as Ukraine GAP. Furthermore, focusing on healthy nutrition values—particularly the benefits of omega-3 fatty acids for cardiovascular health—



meets the rising trend toward healthy lifestyles, particularly among urban populations and younger generations [3].

A key direction involves the development of digital marketing. Digital technologies significantly enhance the ability to promote fish products. Creating an adaptive website with an online ordering module, quality certifications, and traceability features is a critical step toward meeting international standards, particularly those under the EU Food Safety Framework Program. Promotion via social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok—leveraging visual content including stories, recipes, and testimonials—is expected to become a powerful tool for consumer engagement. Tools like content marketing and instructional videos on fish preparation and storage can foster emotional brand connection.

Active communication with the end consumer is an essential component of a successful marketing strategy. To this end, consumer segmentation is necessary, targeting distinct groups such as families with children, youth, the HoReCa segment, and retirees. Establishing feedback systems through social media, surveys, and QR codes on packaging will enhance consumer engagement. Additionally, implementing loyalty programs—such as cumulative bonuses and personalized discounts—can help increase repeat purchases and build emotional brand loyalty.

Brand development is another critical element of a marketing strategy. Ukrainian fish producers should create a strong visual identity through logos, colors, and slogans that reinforce the perception of product quality. Participation in industry exhibitions such as *AgroExpo* and *ProFoodTech*, as well as trade missions, will increase visibility in international markets. Integration into omnichannel distribution systems—including online platforms, marketplaces, HoReCa, and supermarket chains—will allow producers to reach a wider range of customers and boost overall sales.

It is also necessary to ensure institutional and governmental support for the development of the fishery sector. A key element is the establishment of state programs to compensate expenses related to certification, participation in trade exhibitions, and marketing initiatives. Ukraine should develop a unified online portal for fish product exporters and organize trade missions to promote Ukrainian fish on international markets. In addition, the development of advisory marketing centers based at specialized universities or regional institutions is essential, as it will help improve the qualification level of fishery enterprises.

The implementation of these strategies will enhance the competitiveness of Ukrainian fish products both in domestic and international markets, thereby contributing to the sustainable development of the fishery sector and strengthening its position in the global marketplace.

The proposed recommendations for improving marketing strategies in Ukraine's fisheries sector are based on an analysis of current agri-food market trends, theoretical models, and international best practices. Implementing

these strategies has strong potential to enhance competitiveness not only at the enterprise level but also across the sector as a whole, enabling a more effective response to modern market challenges.

The expected effects of implementing the proposed recommendations can be evaluated across several key dimensions. First, the economic effects include increased sales volumes in the domestic market through more effective product positioning, communication, and distribution channels. This will improve business profitability, as reduced reliance on traditional sales formats and the shift toward digital channels help lower operational costs. Furthermore, the expansion of fish exports – particularly to the EU, the Middle East, and Asia – can generate new foreign currency inflows and strengthen the sector's resilience to domestic market fluctuations.

Social effects involve the preservation and creation of jobs in rural areas, which supports local economic development and civic sector stability. Additionally, improving access to high-quality and safe fish products will contribute to higher levels of national food security. One important social outcome is the cultivation of a fish consumption culture, particularly among youth, which aligns with broader healthy lifestyle trends.

Institutional effects include strengthening the role of producer clusters, associations, and regional alliances in promoting collective branding. Such collaboration enables resource pooling and the development of more effective promotional strategies for both domestic and foreign markets. New forms of public-private partnerships in agricultural marketing will also emerge, facilitating the implementation of strategies at the national level.

However, despite the positive outlook, the implementation of these recommendations may face several barriers. One of the main risks involves the financial constraints of small and medium-sized enterprises, which may lack sufficient resources for digitalization, branding, or international market entry. Institutional instability – especially shifts in the political or regulatory environment under martial law – may slow the processes of long-term planning and strategy execution. Moreover, the low level of digital literacy among some producers, particularly in rural communities, hinders the full utilization of online tools, which are essential for adapting to modern market requirements. Another constraint is the limited purchasing power of consumers in certain Ukrainian regions, which may reduce demand for higher-value-added products. External threats – such as declining demand for imported products due to global economic crises or logistical disruptions – could also significantly complicate the situation.

In this context, it is essential to establish effective mechanisms for adaptive risk management, as well as to ensure support from the state, international organizations, and donor funds that can provide the necessary resources for the development of the sector.

To achieve the maximum effect from the implementation of the proposed recommendations, it is important to focus scientific efforts on several key directions. One of the critical aspects involves the development of regional branding models for fish products, taking into account ecological purity, geographical location, and cultural characteristics. Assessing the effectiveness of digital promotion channels for fish products, with consideration for the behavioral traits of Ukrainian consumers, will serve as a basis for creating more precise and effective marketing strategies. Monitoring the impact of governmental support programs on the level of marketing innovation in small enterprises is also crucial. International comparative studies of fish promotion strategies in the EU, Scandinavia, and Asia will enable the identification of successful practices that can be adapted to the Ukrainian context. In light of post-war market recovery, it is also important to model development scenarios that include changes in demand, consumption structure, and export potential.

Overall, a systematic approach to improving marketing in Ukraine's fisheries sector may become a foundation for the economic recovery of the industry and its integration into global agri-food chains.

**Conclusions.** The improvement of marketing strategies for Ukrainian fish producers is a critically important factor in strengthening the competitive position of the industry under conditions of external instability and evolving consumer expectations. The proposed recommendations, grounded in an analysis of current market trends, international practices, and national production characteristics, demonstrate a multifaceted approach to development—ranging from communication digitalization to the formation of joint brands and cluster associations. The comprehensive implementation of such strategies will not only ensure the sustainable development of enterprises but also contribute to the cultivation of a value-oriented fish consumption culture, the enhancement of food security, and the growth of Ukraine's export potential. In the context of global market integration, the fisheries sector has all the prerequisites to become a significant component of national agri-food exports, provided that it is supported by proper governance, state assistance, and scientific guidance.

## **ВДОСКОНАЛЕННЯ МАРКЕТИНГОВИХ СТРАТЕГІЙ УКРАЇНСЬКИХ ВИРОБНИКІВ РИБНОЇ ПРОДУКЦІЇ: РЕКОМЕНДАЦІЇ ТА ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ**

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У статті здійснено комплексний аналіз сучасного стану маркетингових стратегій українських виробників рибної продукції в контексті актуальних внутрішніх викликів та динамічних трансформацій глобального рибного ринку. Встановлено,

що на сьогодні національний сектор аквакультури та рибного господарства характеризується низьким рівнем інтеграції сучасних маркетингових інструментів, що знижує ефективність позиціонування української продукції як на внутрішньому, так і на міжнародному ринках.

Однією з ключових проблем виявлено недостатню розвиненість стратегічного брендингу, відсутність сталої системи комунікації зі споживачем, а також обмежене використання цифрових каналів дистрибуції та просування. Більшість підприємств діють у межах вузького локального ринку, не маючи усталеної маркетингової політики, орієнтованої на довгостроковий розвиток.

Для поглиблення дослідження проаналізовано провідні зарубіжні практики країн з високим рівнем розвитку рибного господарства – зокрема Німеччини, Польщі, США та Китаю. Визначено, що успіх цих країн значною мірою забезпечено впровадженням інноваційних підходів у просуванні рибної продукції, широким використанням елементів екологічного маркетингу, а також ефективною взаємодією між виробниками, торговельними мережами та державними інституціями. Особливу увагу приділено досвіду розвитку кооперативних форм господарювання, сертифікації якості та екологічного походження продукції, а також створенню сталих брендів із високою лояльністю споживачів.

На основі проведеного аналізу запропоновано низку практичних рекомендацій, реалізація яких дозволить активізувати маркетингову діяльність українських виробників. Серед них: формування системи локального брендингу, розвиток інтернет-продажів та соціальних медіа як каналів взаємодії зі споживачем, підтримка кооперацій між дрібними виробниками, а також орієнтація на екологічно чисту, сертифіковану продукцію.

У результаті дослідження обґрунтовано перспективи формування комплексної системи просування української рибної продукції, яка здатна не лише задовольняти зростаючі запити внутрішнього споживача, але й посилювати конкурентоспроможність на міжнародних ринках, що є особливо важливим в умовах євроінтеграційних процесів та лібералізації торгівлі.

Ключові слова: маркетинг рибної продукції; аквакультура; брендинг; експорт; споживчі вподобання; цифрові канали збуту; міжнародний ринок; конкурентоспроможність; кооперація; екологічна сертифікація; маркетингові стратегії; рибне господарство України.

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