

A Fishy Tale

There was a jolly fishmonger who was well known for selling a wide choice of fish to his customers. He was well respected and customers came from far and wide to sample his fish. Customers would tell him what they wanted to cook and he would recommend the best fish for their meal. He never had any complaints and 98% of his customers recommended their friends to him. He was inspected on a regular basis by the Food Standards Authority (FSA) and they always said that the fish was good and fresh. He paid them a lot of money to check both him and all fishmongers and make sure that all was well. He proudly displayed his certificates on the wall of his shop that showed he was qualified to sell fish.

The FSA was very keen that we should all eat as much fresh fish as was possible because it was very good for us. They were determined that as many people as possible should be able to eat food that was good for them and would make them healthy and wise.

One day, he had a visit from the FSA and was told several important matters:

Firstly, that in order to continue being a fishmonger he had to pass some more exams. If he didn't his shop would be closed down. "I don't have a problem with more exams if my customers benefit but many fishmongers would not choose to do this and there will be fewer fishmongers", he cried "How will this help more people to eat good fish?" The man from the FSA said "You silly seller of fish-don't you understand? People don't trust you, they think you sell bad fish and the only way they will trust you is if you're really well qualified to sell the poshest fish in the land." The Fishmonger retorted- "but nearly all my customers do trust me- You asked me to do a survey, don't you remember? I wrote to all my customers at some expense and 98% said they thought I was great and so was my fish. They don't want the poshest fish - they can't afford it and if that's what I sell they won't buy it. Those who do want the posh fish go to the big cities"

The second point was that the FSA were worried that you might go bankrupt and so we want you to keep 3 months expenses or a minimum of £20,000 groats in the bank just in case. "I don't have that sort of money to leave in an account" he replied. I have never borrowed from my bank and they are having hard times so they won't lend me the money. Where would I get such a huge sum? Why, finding this could bankrupt me".

"Thirdly, said the man from the FSA we think that you might sell some fish today and that someone might get very ill by eating it and so we think that you should be liable for any fish related illnesses that your customers may get for the rest of your life." "Surely that can't be right, Sir?" said the fishmonger now very worried. "People would know within a short while if my fish had made them ill, and they would tell me." "Well we don't think so and whatever the Law of the Land says or our masters in the Land of Europe dictate then that's what will happen!"

"Next we should like you agree with each customer what they will pay for each fish in advance. We know that for ages you have told your customers how much your gross profit is on each fish but now you will have to negotiate with each punter and you will not be able to hide behind your wicked prices. You have got away with murder with the fact that you make lots of money on some fish and less on others". The Fishmonger wearily replied that his customers didn't want to spend ages

debating the gross profit that he made and in any event the extensive research that the FSA had done had shown that there was no bias of cod over haddock or plaice". "Ahaa, we have you there because the public think that there is a bias and just because they think there is we must do something!" "But my customers don't" wailed the Fishmonger." Ask them, ask all Fishmongers' customers". "Oh it's not your customers that we are worried about or any of the Fishmongers - It's the people who aren't your customers who think you're biased against cod that we need to convince" " So let me get this straight, you're going to make some big changes that will cost a lot of money and time for all of us so that people who don't buy fish will change their minds about something that's not even correct and do you think they will buy fish when they didn't before?" he asked rhetorically.

Then the Fishmonger said "I have a question for you. Will the big stores that just sell their own brand of fish have to do all of these things, like the personal liability and the agreement of costs and the qualifications? I should like it to be clear that I can provide advice on all sorts of fish to my customers and that all they do is sell whatever they have to people." "Oh you silly seller of fish, of course not they will call themselves "Fish Sales Advisers" and they will have no liability to sell their simple fish - it will be cheaper for them too as we think that we should make it easier for the big stores to sell fish

The fishmonger was no longer a jolly one.....