



Title	Detection and characterization of lipids in eleven species of fish by non-targeted liquid chromatography/mass spectrometry
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1 **Detection and characterization of lipids in eleven species of fish by**  
2 **non-targeted liquid chromatography/mass spectrometry**

3  
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26        **1. Abstract**

27        Fish is an important nutrition source because its lipids, which are rich in  $\omega$ -3 fatty acids, are  
28        beneficial for human health. However, studies focusing on their detection, composition, and  
29        nutritional value are limited. In this study, we applied a non-targeted lipidomic approach  
30        based on ultra-high performance liquid chromatography coupled with linear-ion trap-  
31        Orbitrap mass spectrometry (UHPLC/LTQ-Orbitrap-MS) to comprehensively profile,  
32        compare, and detect unknown lipids in eleven types of dietary fish. A total of 287 molecular  
33        species from five major lipid classes were characterized by MS/MS analysis. Multivariate  
34        principal component analysis revealed the distinct lipid composition in shishamo smelt and  
35        Japanese sardine compared to other fish types. The assessment of nutritional indices  
36        based on the levels of free fatty acid suggested that among the eleven fish types, shishamo  
37        smelt is highly beneficial for health. Further, lipids such as N-acyl  
38        lysophosphatidylethanolamine were detected and characterized for the first time in fish  
39        fillets. Hierarchical cluster correlations indicated the predominance of glycerophospholipids  
40        (GPs) and sphingolipids in sardine, whereas fatty acyls and triacylglycerols (TAGs) were  
41        predominant in shishamo smelt. The high levels of polyunsaturated fatty acid-enriched GPs  
42        and TAGs in dietary fish endow it with great potential as a health-promoting food for human  
43        consumption. This study offers a comprehensive analysis of lipids and their compositions in  
44        fish fillets, demonstrating their potential use in the nutritional assessment of functional foods.

45        **Keywords:** Fish fillet, lipidomics, nutritional indices, N-acyl lyso-phosphatidylethanolamine,  
46        liquid chromatography, mass spectrometry, correlation analysis

47        **1. Introduction**

48        Fish are an important component of human nutrition and contain many valuable nutrients,  
49        such as bioactive lipids, essential amino acids, minerals, vitamins, and proteins(Neff et al.,  
50        2014). The benefit of this meat matrix is highly related to the quality of their lipid content.  
51        Lipids such as long-chain fatty acids account for one of the key constituents of fish fillets  
52        with potential health benefits (Xu et al., 2020). Fatty acids are classified into saturated fatty  
53        acid (SFA), monounsaturated fatty acid (MUFA), and polyunsaturated fatty acid (PUFA),  
54        depending on the number of double bonds. Fish and its products are a known source of  
55        long-chain  $\omega$ -3 PUFAs such as docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentaenoic acid  
56        (EPA) (Xu et al., 2020). Extensive studies have demonstrated that the intake of fish  
57        products is associated with the reduction of major chronic diseases, inflammation, and  
58        cardiovascular events (Virtanen et al., 2008). The fatty acid content and types mainly vary  
59        according to species, seasons, and geographic conditions (Zhang et al., 2020).

60        Diets rich in SFAs increase the blood cholesterol levels and cardiovascular disease risks  
61        (Garonzi et al., 2021). Conversely,  $\omega$ -3 PUFAs offers protection against cardiovascular  
62        disease (Yagi et al., 2017), diabetes (Farrell et al., 2021), and neurodegeneration to reduce  
63        inflammation (Borsini et al., 2021). However, men with high blood levels of  $\omega$ -3 PUFAs are  
64        reported to have an increased risk of prostate cancer (Brasky et al., 2013). Hence, a  
65        balanced intake of SFA and PUFA in the diet is preferred to reduce the disease risk (Kang  
66        et al., 2005). In addition to the PUFA:SFA ratio, several nutritional indices have been  
67        developed to provide further knowledge on fish lipid quality and its association with  
68        diseases (Fernandes et al., 2014). Moreover, several functional lipids other than fatty acids,  
69        such as phospholipids (PLs), glycerolipids (GLs), and sphingolipids, are yet to be  
70        characterized well in dietary fishes. Notably, the abundant nutritional and healthy  
71        characteristics of fish are primarily attributed to the abundance of PLs and GLs rich in high-  
72        level of  $\omega$ -3 PUFAs (Schuchardt & Hahn, 2013).

73 Although several analytical methods focus on the targeted determination of lipids in various  
74 fish types by gas or liquid chromatography/mass spectrometry(LC/MS), they are limited to  
75 the analysis of a specific class of lipids such as fatty acids (de Souza et al., 2020;  
76 Devadason et al., 2016). Recently, untargeted mass spectrometric approaches have been  
77 widely used in comprehensive food and fish lipidome profiling (Siddabasave et al., 2021;  
78 Zang et al., 2018; Zhou et al., 2018). However, studies focusing on the comprehensive lipid  
79 fingerprinting of dietary fish are limited. In our previous study, we profiled fatty acids and  
80 annotated furan-fatty acids in seafood by nontargeted analysis (Siddabasave et al., 2021).  
81 In this study, we present a comprehensive lipidome profiling of dietary fish using a highly  
82 sensitive ultra-high performance liquid chromatography coupled with linear-ion trap-Orbitrap  
83 mass spectrometry (UHPLC/LTQ-Orbitrap-MS) technique. Comparative correlations of  
84 multiple lipids among the characterized eleven common dietary fish were studied, and their  
85 nutritional significance from the dietary aspect was discussed. Further, previously unknown  
86 lipids such as N-acyl lysophosphatidylethanolamine were characterized in fish fillets using  
87 the un-targeted technique.

## 88 **2. Materials and method**

### 89 **2.1. Materials**

90 Solvents such as isopropanol, chloroform, and methanol of LC/MS grade were purchased  
91 from Wako Pure Chemical Industries, Ltd., (Osaka, Japan). Ammonium acetate (eluent  
92 additive for LC/MS, 1 M) was obtained from Sigma-Aldrich (St. Louis, USA). Zirconium  
93 ceramic oxide bulk beads (1.4 mm, catalog no. 15-340-159, Fisherbrand) for fillet  
94 homogenization were purchased from Thermo Fisher Scientific (Tokyo, Japan). The  
95 EquiSPLASH LIPIDOMIX quantitative standard for mass spectrometry and oleic acid-d9  
96 internal standards were purchased from Avanti Polar Lipids, Inc (Alabaster, USA).

### 97 **2.2. Fish samples**

98 Commercially available refrigerated fish such as Pacific cod (*Gadus macrocephalus*,  
99 Madara in Japanese, Hokkaido, Japan), saffron cod (*Eleginus gracilis*, Komai, Hokkaido,  
100 Japan), Lindberg skate (*Raja pulchra*, Makasube, Hokkaido, Japan), blackin flounder  
101 (*Microstomus achne*, Nametagarei, Hokkaido, Japan), Japanese sardine (*Sardinops*  
102 *melanostictus*, Maiwashi, Hokkaido, Japan), Japanese pond smelt (*Hypomesus*  
103 *nipponensis*, Wakasai, Hokkaido, Japan), red seabream (*Pagrus major*, Madai, Ehime,  
104 Japan), flatfish (*Paralichthys olivaceus*, Hirame, Hokkaido, Japan), shishamo smelt  
105 (*Spirinchus lanceolatus*, Shisyamo, Hokkaido, Japan), skipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*,  
106 Katuo, Shizuoka, Japan), and Okhotsk Atka mackerel (*Pleurogrammus azonus*, Mahokke,  
107 Hokkaido, Japan) were purchased from different supermarkets located in Sapporo,  
108 Hokkaido, Japan and were stored at -80 °C until the analysis. Triplicate analysis was  
109 performed for each fish species.

### 110 **2.3. Lipid extraction**

111 Total lipid extraction of the fish fillet was performed by the method described by Folch with  
112 minor modifications (Folch et al., 1957; Siddabasave et al., 2021). A freeze-dried fish fillet  
113 was weighed and homogenized in 10 volumes of methanol in a homogenizer (Bead Mill 4,  
114 Fisherbrand, Tokyo, Japan) for 30 s (× 2 cycles). Subsequently, 100 µL of the homogenate  
115 (10 mg) was transferred to a 1.5 mL Eppendorf tube, and 100 µL of the pre-mixed internal  
116 standard in methanol was added (10 ng of each of the following: phosphatidylcholine (PC)  
117 (15:0-18:1(d7)), phosphatidylethanolamine (PE) (15:0-18:1(d7)), phosphatidylglycerol (PG)  
118 (15:0-18:1(d7)), phosphatidylserine (PS) (15:0-18:1(d7)), phosphatidylinositol (PI) (15:0-  
119 18:1(d7)), lysophosphatidylethanolamine (LPE) (18:1(d7)), lysophosphatidylcholine (LPC)  
120 (18:1(d7)), sphingomyelin (SM) (d18:1/18:0(d9)), ceramide (Cer) (d18:1/15:0 (d7)),  
121 triacylglycerol (TAG) (15:0-18:1(d7)-15:0), diacylglycerol (DAG) (15:0-18:1(d7)), cholesterol  
122 ester (18:1(d7)), and monoacylglycerol (MAG) (18:1(d7)) and 100 ng of oleic acid (d9)) and  
123 vortexed at 3500 rpm for 30 s. Then, 400 µL of chloroform was added and vortexed for

124 5 min; subsequently, 100  $\mu$ L of milli-Q was added and the solution was further vortexed for  
125 30 s. The lipid extracts were centrifuged at 15,000 rpm for 10 min. After centrifugation, the  
126 chloroform layer was transferred to a new Eppendorf tube, and the aqueous layer was re-  
127 extracted with an additional 400  $\mu$ L of chloroform. The combined chloroform layer  
128 containing lipids was collected and evaporated under a vacuum in a centrifuge evaporator,  
129 which was then dissolved in 100  $\mu$ L of methanol, centrifuged, and transferred to an LC/MS  
130 vial.

#### 131 **2.4. LC/MS analysis**

132 The UHPLC system (Shimadzu Corporation, Kyoto, Japan) was equipped with an Atlantis  
133 T3 C18 column (2.1  $\times$  150 mm, 3  $\mu$ m, Waters, Milford, USA). The LC/MS conditions were  
134 slightly modified compared to those reported in our previous studies (Gowda et al., 2021;  
135 Siddabasave et al., 2021). The column temperature was maintained at 40  $^{\circ}$ C; the flow rate  
136 and injection volume were 0.2 mL/min and 10  $\mu$ L, respectively. Mobile phases used were  
137 10 mM aq.  $\text{CH}_3\text{COON}_4$  (A), isopropanol (B), and methanol (C). The gradient elution is as  
138 follows: 0–1 min, 30% B and 35% C; 1–9 min, 75% B and 15% C; 9–21 min, 82.5% B and  
139 15% C; 21–25 min, 95% B and 5% C; 25–26 min, 30% B and 35% C. The column was pre-  
140 equilibrated for 4 min; the total run time was 30 min. Mass spectrometry analysis was  
141 performed on a LTQ Orbitrap mass spectrometer (Thermo-Fisher Scientific Inc., San Jose,  
142 USA) in the positive and negative ionization modes. The electron spray ionization (ESI)  
143 conditions were set as follows: capillary temperature 330  $^{\circ}$ C; sheath gas flow 50 units; and  
144 auxiliary gas 20 and 30 units for the positive and negative modes, respectively. For the  
145 negative mode, the source and capillary voltage was set to 3 kV and 10 V, respectively. For  
146 the positive mode, source and capillary voltage was set to 4 kV and 25 V, respectively. The  
147  $\text{MS}^1$  scan range was set at  $m/z$  160–1900 and 100–1750 for negative and positive modes,  
148 respectively in a Fourier transform mode with a resolving power of 60,000 collision energy

149 of 35 V to obtain MS spectra for high-resolution masses. Low-resolution MS/MS spectra  
150 were obtained at a collision energy of 40 V in the ion-trap mode.

## 151 **2.5. Data processing for identification of lipids**

152 The raw data obtained from the MS was processed for alignment, peak extraction,  
153 identification, and peak area integration using MS-DIAL software (ver 4.2). The following  
154 parameters were set during data processing in MS-DIAL: peak height cut-off 1000  
155 amplitude, mass slice width 0.1 Da, smoothing level and minimum peak width 3 and 5  
156 scans, sigma window 0.5, and signal intensity 5 folds (> blank) (Siddabasave et al., 2021).  
157 The retention time and MS<sup>1</sup> tolerance were 0.5 min and 0.015 Da, respectively. The  
158 identification of lipid molecular species was confirmed by their MS/MS spectra. Extracted  
159 ion chromatograms and MS spectra illustrated herein were obtained using Xcalibur 2.2  
160 (Thermo Fisher Scientific, Waltham, USA). The relative quantification of lipid metabolites  
161 was performed according to the guidelines of Lipidomics Standards Initiative level 2 and  
162 level 3. Relative quantification was achieved considering that the lipid molecule was  
163 quantified by the labeled internal standard of similar lipid subclasses or a typical lipid class.  
164 The relative amount was calculated by considering peak area ratios of the analyte to the  
165 internal standard and multiplying it using the added internal standard.

## 166 **2.6. Calculation of lipid health quality indexes**

167 The nutritional assessment of eleven fish types was conducted based on their values of  
168 index of atherogenicity (IA), health promotion index (HPI), hypo/hypercholesterolemic (HH)  
169 ratio, and fish lipid quality (FLQ). These parameters were calculated based on the  
170 equations suggested in a previous study (J. Chen & Liu, 2020). IA indicates the relationship  
171 between the total SFAs and the total unsaturated fatty acids (UFAs); it assesses the  
172 atherogenic potential of FA (Ulbricht & Southgate, 1991). The SFAs, which include C12:0,  
173 C14:0, and C16:0, are considered pro-atherogenic whereas UFAs are considered to be



174 anti-atherogenic properties. The IA value is ranges from 0.21 to 1.41 for fish (S. Chen et al.,  
175 2004) and was calculated using the following equation:

$$176 \quad IA = [C12:0+(4 \times C14:0) +C16:0]/\Sigma UFA.$$

177 The HPI is the reciprocal of IA and is an index for evaluating the nutritional value of dietary  
178 fat (S. Chen et al., 2004). This value determines the effect of fatty acid composition on  
179 cardiovascular diseases (CVD). It is mainly used in research on dairy products and a value  
180 ranges from 0.16-0.68 (S. Chen et al., 2004). The HPI was calculated using the following  
181 equation:

$$182 \quad HPI = \Sigma UFA/[C12:0+(4 \times C14:0)+ C16:0].$$

183 Further, the HH ratio was used to assess the effect of FA composition on cholesterol and  
184 predict the cardiovascular risk. It characterizes the relationship between  
185 hypocholesterolemic fatty acid (C18: 1 and PUFA) and hypercholesterolemia FA. It is  
186 assumed that, HH ratio could accurately reflect the effect of the FA composition on CVD.  
187 The HH ratio is ranges from 1.54 to 4.83 for fish (S. Chen et al., 2004). and was calculated  
188 using the following equation:

$$189 \quad HH = (C18:1+\Sigma PUFA)/(C12:0+C14:0+C16:0).$$

190 In the HH equation, the term “cis-C18:1” was revised to “C18:1” because we did not  
191 characterize cis or trans isomers in the present method. FLQ calculates the sum of EPA  
192 and DHA as a percentage of total fatty acids. This parameter is used to assess the quality  
193 of the fish lipids and is more suitable for marine products because of their high proportions  
194 of EPA (FA 22:6) and DHA (FA 20:5). FLQ is widely used for marine products and it  
195 calculated using the ratio of sum of EPA and DHA as percentage of total FAs. The FLQ is  
196 ranges from 13.01 to 36.37 for fish (S. Chen et al., 2004) and was calculated using the  
197 following equation:

$$198 \quad FLQ = 100 \times (C22:6 + C20:5) / \Sigma FA.$$

## 199 **2.7 Statistical analysis**

200 The data were subjected to one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), principal component  
201 analysis (PCA), and cluster correlation analysis using MetaboAnalyst (ver 5.0). The data  
202 were plotted in GraphPad Prism 8 software as the mean  $\pm$  standard error (analysis of  
203 triplicate of each sample). Student's *t*-test ( $p < 0.05$ ) or one-way ANOVA (\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p <$   
204  $0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , ns: not significant) were used to study statistically significant differences  
205 between the groups.

### 206 **3. Results and Discussion**

#### 207 **3.1. Lipid annotation and principal component analysis of eleven types of fish**

208 The lipidomic profiles of fish fillets were analyzed by UHPLC/LTQ-Orbitrap-MS in both  
209 positive and negative modes. A total of 287 lipid molecular species were annotated based  
210 on their exact masses and MS/MS behavior by MS-DIAL software. After the identification  
211 and relative quantification using the internal standard method, the multivariate analysis such  
212 as one-way ANOVA ( $p < 0.05$ ) with Tukey's post-hoc analysis was applied. The results are  
213 shown in **Fig 1a**; 282 lipid molecular species (red) were statistically significant, and 5 were  
214 insignificant (green). The PCA demonstrated the differences based on the lipid  
215 composition changes of the groups. The PCA analysis of the 287 annotated lipids from  
216 eleven types of fish was performed, and the results are illustrated in **Fig 1b**. A previous  
217 study demonstrated comparative lipid profiles of various commercial fishes from Japan.  
218 However, their analysis was limited to only the fatty acid class (Devadason et al., 2016).  
219 The score plots showed distinct grouping and clear separation between the Japanese  
220 sardine and the shishamo smelt, suggesting their distinct lipid composition compared to  
221 other analyzed fish types. Although these two species were previously studied for their lipid  
222 content, a comprehensive class-specific determination was not conducted (Shirai et al.,  
223 2002). The two components, PC1 and PC2, accounted for 90.3% of the total model  
224 variance, which was described by 56.9% of PC1. The loading plot signifies the distribution  
225 of the important variables, the two first principal components, and the groupings among the

226 samples. A loading plot of components that affects the differences is visualized in the score  
227 plot, as shown in **Fig 1b**. The larger positive or negative loading scores indicate that a  
228 variable strongly affects the components. Lipids such as triacylglycerols (TAG  
229 (16:0/18:1/18:1)), cholesterol esters (CE 20:5, CE 22:6), and sphingomyelin (SM  
230 (d18:1/24:0)) have large positive loading scores (for PC1) and contributed mainly for the  
231 group separation. These results indicate the differential lipids responsible for group  
232 separation in the two-dimensional PCA plot.

### 233 **3.2 Distributions of lipid classes in eleven different types of fish**

234 The percentage distributions based on the total amount of each lipid class for all the fish  
235 types are represented by pie charts, and the results are illustrated in **Fig 2a**. The lipid  
236 molecular species were grouped based on their main categories, such as  
237 glycerophospholipids (GP), sphingolipids (SP), glycerolipids (GL), fatty acyls (FA), and  
238 sterols (ST), according to the LIPID MAPS guidelines. Although these lipids are beneficial to  
239 human health, their percentage distribution studies in fish are limited. Profiling of  
240 phospholipids and eicosanoids in Atlantic salmon was attempted using shotgun lipidomics;  
241 however, other lipid classes were not examined (Yeo & Parrish, 2021). Recently, interest in  
242 GPs has dramatically increased owing to their biochemical features in the lipid fraction  
243 (Pongsetkul et al., 2017). In our results, the Lindberg skate (83.61%), skipjack tuna  
244 (74.80%), and Okhotsk atka mackerel (70.68%) demonstrated the highest abundance of  
245 GPs. In contrast, shishamo smelt (86.39%), Japanese sardine (64.27%), and red seabream  
246 (50.64%) had higher levels of GLs. The abundance of different molecular species of GPs  
247 has been reported in fermented fish (Zang et al., 2018). However, information on the lipid  
248 molecular species in commercially available dietary fish is still limited. Hence, in our  
249 analysis, we annotated the lipids from multiple classes at molecular species level using  
250 state-of-the-art mass spectrometry. Blackin flounder (34.40%) and flatfish (24.48%)  
251 demonstrated the highest abundance of sphingolipids, whereas saffron cod (49.23%) had  
252 the highest percentage of fatty acyls. In a previous study, the amount of fatty acids in

253 saffron cod was present in the milligram-scale with a higher amount of neutral lipids than  
254 polar lipids (Copeman et al., 2020). Remarkably, we also determined sterols (mainly CEs as  
255 major lipids in Pacific cod (68.89%). Although sterols, including various cholesterol esters,  
256 were reported in the red fish muscle (Voronin et al., 2021) and cod liver (Hammann et al.,  
257 2015), they were not observed in the Pacific cod fillets. Thus, the present study is the first to  
258 demonstrate the abundance of sterols in fillets.

### 259 **3.3 Fish fatty acid compositions and aspects of nutritional indices**

260 Untargeted analysis of fish samples detected 36 fatty acid molecular species from C<sub>12</sub> to  
261 C<sub>28</sub> carbon chain. These species were further classified as saturated fatty acid (SFA),  
262 mono-unsaturated fatty acid (MUFA), and poly-unsaturated fatty acid (PUFA), based on  
263 their number of double bonds. The relative amounts of total SFAs, MUFAs, and PUFAs in  
264 different types of fish studied are illustrated in **Fig 2b**. The highest amount of SFAs  
265 (10.50±0.21 mg/100g) and MUFAs (11.59±0.32 mg) was observed in shishamo smelt  
266 followed by saffron cod (8.22±0.36 mg, 3.23±0.06 mg), whereas Japanese sardine had the  
267 lowest amount of MUFAs (0.15±0.01 mg). Furthermore, the highest amount of bioactive  
268 PUFAs was observed in shishamo smelt (12.7±0.30 mg) and the lowest in skipjack tuna  
269 (0.16±0.01 mg). A previous study had established that fish-derived ω-3 PUFAs, particularly  
270 DHA and EPA, had favorable effects on cardiovascular, neurological, inflammatory, and  
271 metabolic disorders (Parolini, 2019). Considering this aspect, shishamo smelt could be a  
272 promising source as a dietary supplement of sufficient amount of PUFAs compared to other  
273 groups. Subsequently, the evaluation of PUFA/SFA (P:S) ratio was conducted, and the  
274 results are shown in **Fig 2c**.

275 The P:S ratio is considered as the most common index to assess the dietary food nutritional  
276 value. It is also used to evaluate the impact of diet on the cardiovascular health; a value in  
277 the range 1–1.5 in salmon trout is favorable for reducing the risk of cardiac diseases (Kang  
278 et al., 2005). Our results indicate that shishamo smelt has the highest P:S ratio (1.21)

279 followed by saffron cod (0.79), whereas skipjack tuna had the lowest value (0.04).  
280 Therefore, shishamo smelt could be considered a valuable source in diet due to its  
281 appropriate levels of P:S ratio. Recently, the P:S ratio of various food products was  
282 extensively reviewed, and the ranges were as follows: sea weeds: 0.42–2.12, meat: 0.11–  
283 2.04, fish: 0.11–1.62, and shellfish: 0.20–2.10 (J. Chen & Liu, 2020). Our previous study  
284 also demonstrated the highest P:S value of 1.52 in salmon trout (Siddabasave et al., 2021).  
285 Hence, the P:S value of dietary fish evaluated in this study could be useful to assess their  
286 potential nutritional value. The relative concentrations of each identified fatty acid are  
287 represented by a heatmap visualization, as shown in **Fig 3a**, classifying each group and  
288 clustered with each other. The intense red color indicates the high concentration of fatty  
289 acids in that group. Conversely, the intense blue color implies the low concentration of fatty  
290 acids. These results suggest that fatty acids, including FA 20:5 and FA 22:6, are  
291 considerably high in shishamo smelt and Saffron cod.

292 Fish with different fatty acid profiles may contribute differently toward human health. These  
293 benefits can be evaluated using the nutritional indices, such as the IA, HPI, HH ratio, and  
294 FLQ; their respective equations are described in Section 2.6. The nutritional qualities of the  
295 lipid profiles from this study and related indices are shown in **Fig 3b**. The IA value was  
296 higher in skipjack tuna ( $4.86\pm 0.39$ ) followed by Lindberg skate ( $3.09\pm 0.15$ ) and lower in  
297 shishamo smelt ( $0.30\pm 0.01$ ) and saffron cod ( $0.48\pm 0.02$ ). A previous study reported that  
298 consuming foods with lower IA values could decrease the total cholesterol and low-density  
299 lipoprotein-cholesterol in human blood plasma (Yurchenko et al., 2018). Additionally, the IA  
300 value of fish was reported to range from 0.21 to 1.41 (J. Chen & Liu, 2020). Among all the  
301 fish analyzed, the highest HPI value was in shishamo smelt ( $3.30\pm 0.06$ ) and saffron cod  
302 ( $2.09\pm 0.11$ ), and the lowest value was in skipjack tuna ( $0.21\pm 0.02$ ) and Lindberg skate  
303 ( $0.32\pm 0.02$ ). Previously, the HPI was mainly used to evaluate the nutritional value of milk  
304 and cheese; the value ranges from 0.16 to 0.68 (J. Chen & Liu, 2020).

305 Additionally, the HH ratio was the highest in shishamo smelt ( $4.18 \pm 0.09$ ) and saffron cod  
306 ( $2.22 \pm 0.13$ ) and the lowest in skipjack tuna ( $0.21 \pm 0.02$ ). Compared with the P:S ratio, the  
307 HH ratio can precisely reflect the effect of the fatty acid composition on cardiovascular  
308 diseases. The HH ratio indicates the effect of fatty acids on cholesterol metabolism, and the  
309 higher values are desirable for human health. A recent review reported that the HH levels in  
310 fish were in between 0.87 and 4.83 (J. Chen & Liu, 2020). Finally, the quality of lipids is  
311 assessed by FLQ indices. The highest value was obtained for saffron cod ( $23.51 \pm 0.65$ ),  
312 Pacific cod ( $22.45 \pm 0.34$ ), and shishamo smelt ( $21.95 \pm 0.79$ ). Skipjack tuna ( $1.29 \pm 0.07$ )  
313 demonstrated the lowest FLQ indices among all fish types. Fish lipid quality is the  
314 percentage of EPA and DHA in total fatty acids. These fatty acids reduce the risk of CVD  
315 (Breslow, 2006) and dementia (Johnson & Schaefer, 2006). Previous studies reported the  
316 quality of fish lipids by FLQ indices, with the value in the 13.01–36.37 range (J. Chen & Liu,  
317 2020). Additionally, the FLQ value assessed the seasonal changes in the fatty acid profile  
318 of the fillet of red bream (Senso et al., 2007). Because this index was high in saffron cod,  
319 this fish has a great scope for further development as a nutritional supplement.

#### 320 **3.4. Identification of N-acyl-lysophosphatidylethanolamine (LNAPE) in fish fillets**

321 Untargeted LC/MS analysis of total lipid extracts from eleven different types of fish detected  
322 the previously discovered lipids, particularly N-acyl-lysophosphatidylethanolamine (LNAPE),  
323 which were the partially hydrolyzed products of N-acyl-phosphatidylethanolamine (NAPE).  
324 Although these lipids belong to the family of phosphatidylethanolamines (PEs), their amine  
325 moieties are esterified with fatty acids. NAPEs were previously detected in the brain of bony  
326 fish; however, they were not detected in cartilaginous skeletons (Schmid et al., 1990).  
327 Nevertheless, the study lacks a complete characterization of the lipids. The occurrence of  
328 NAPEs in mammals and other organisms, such as yeast, insects, reptiles and worms, were  
329 also reported (Wellner et al., 2013). However, to the best of our knowledge, no studies have  
330 detected LNAPEs in fish fillets. NAPEs are the precursors of bioactive N-acylethanolamines  
331 (NAE), which are endogenous signaling molecules. The incorporation of NAPE-producing

332 bacteria into the gut retards high-fat diet-induced obesity in wild-type mice (Chen et al.,  
333 2014) and improves cardiometabolic disease indices in low-density lipoprotein null mice  
334 (May-Zhang et al., 2019). Furthermore, multiple studies demonstrated the anti-inflammatory  
335 effects of NAPEs (Dalle Carbonare et al., 2008; Solorzano et al., 2009). Despite their great  
336 benefits, the characterization of NAPEs in food is still limited.

337 In this study, we detected seven molecular species of LNAPE with FA 20:5 as the  
338 predominating N-acylated fatty acid. The extracted ion chromatograms of LNAPE are  
339 shown in **Fig 4a**; their relative levels and other lysophospholipids in each fish type are  
340 visualized by a heatmap, as illustrated in **Fig 4b**. The identification of these lipids was  
341 confirmed by their high-resolution masses obtained from their MS spectra and  
342 fragmentation behavior observed in low-resolution MS/MS spectra. The MS and MS/MS  
343 spectra of all the seven major LNAPE species are shown in **Fig 5**. These lipids ionized in  
344 negative mode to provide  $[M-H]^-$  ion as the precursor ion. The compound elutes with a  
345 retention time of 13.92 min and as a  $m/z$  value of 688.4929  $[C_{37}H_{72}NO_8P]$ , calculated  $m/z$ :  
346 688.4923, error: -0.05 ppm], and ionizes to generate  $m/z$  452.3 by the neutral loss of FA  
347 16:1 and  $H_2O$ . Additionally, peaks at  $m/z$  255.3 (FA16:0) and 253.3 (FA 16:1) in the MS/MS  
348 spectra suggest that the detected compound is LNAPE-(N-(FA16:0)/16:1). The lipid eluted  
349 at 14.25 min has  $m/z$  740.5242  $[C_{41}H_{76}NO_8P]$ , calculated  $m/z$ : 740.5236, error: 0.28 ppm]  
350 and ionizes to generate  $m/z$  478.5 by the neutral loss of FA 18:2 and  $H_2O$ . Moreover,  
351 predominant peaks at  $m/z$  279 (FA 18:2) and FA  $m/z$  281 (FA 18:1) in the MS/MS spectra  
352 indicate that the detected compound is LNAPE (N-(FA18:1)/18:2). The lipid eluted at 13.91  
353 min has  $m/z$  736.4936  $[C_{41}H_{72}NO_8P]$ , calculated  $m/z$ : 736.49231, error: 1.23 ppm] and  
354 ionizes to provide  $m/z$  452.3 by the neutral loss of FA 20:5 and water. Further, peaks at  $m/z$   
355 255 (FA 16:0 and  $m/z$  301 (FA 20:5) in the MS/MS spectra imply that the detected  
356 compound is LNAPE-(N-(FA16:0)/20:5).

357 The compound eluted at 13.64 min has  $m/z$  748.4928  $[C_{42}H_{72}NO_8P]$ , calculated  $m/z$ :  
358 748.4923, error: 2.28 ppm] and demonstrates an MS behavior similar to that mentioned

359 earlier; it ionizes to afford  $m/z$  464.4 (neutral loss of FA 20:5 and water), 267 (FA 17:1), and  
360 301 (FA 20:5) in the MS/MS spectra, suggesting that the detected compound is LNAPE (N-  
361 (FA17:1)/20:5). Similarly, the lipid eluted at 13.96 min has  $m/z$  762.5084 [ $C_{43}H_{74}NO_8P$ ,  
362 calculated  $m/z$ : 762.5079, error: 1.39 ppm] and ionizes to afford  $m/z$  478 by the neutral loss  
363 of FA 20:5 and water. Peaks at  $m/z$  281(FA 18:1) and 301(FA 20:5) in the MS/MS spectra  
364 suggest that the detected compound is LNAPE (N-(FA18:1)/20:5). The lipid eluted at 13.27  
365 min has  $m/z$  758.4775 [ $C_{43}H_{70}NO_8P$ , calculated  $m/z$ : 758.4766, error: 1.18 ppm] and ionizes  
366 to provide  $m/z$  474 (neutral loss of FA 20:5 and water); the peaks at  $m/z$  277 (FA 18:3) and  
367  $m/z$  301(FA 20:5) in the MS/MS spectra suggest that it is also an isomeric mixture and  
368 mainly comprises LNAPE (N-(FA18:3)/20:5). Finally, the lipid eluted at 13.90 min has  $m/z$   
369 810.5081 [ $C_{47}H_{74}NO_8P$ , calculated  $m/z$ : 810.5078, error: 2.65 ppm], and it ionizes to give  
370  $m/z$  520 (loss of FA 20:5 and water) and  $m/z$  500 (loss of FA 22:6 and water). Moreover,  
371 peaks of FA 22:6 ( $m/z$  327), FA 20:5 ( $m/z$  301), FA 20:4 ( $m/z$  303), FA 22:6 ( $m/z$  283), and  
372 FA 20:5 ( $m/z$  301) in the MS/MS spectra indicate that it is an isomeric mixture of LNAPE (N-  
373 (FA 20:4)/22:6) and LNAPE (N-(FA 22:5)/20:5).

374 The concentrations (mean  $\pm$  SE, in mg/100g) of total LNAPE were as follows: red seabream  
375 (0.25 $\pm$ 0.01), flatfish (0.33 $\pm$ 0.05), Okhotsk atka mackerel (0.44 $\pm$ 0.02 mg), Japanese sardine  
376 (0.75 $\pm$ 0.02 mg), blackin flounder (0.75 $\pm$ 0.02 mg), Lindberg skate (0.25 $\pm$ 0.01 mg), skipjack  
377 tuna (0.19 $\pm$ 0.03 mg), saffron cod (0.15 $\pm$ 0.00 mg), shishamo smelt (0.33 $\pm$ 0.02 mg), Pacific  
378 cod (0.19 $\pm$ 0.01 mg), and Japanese pond smelt (0.83 $\pm$ 0.03 mg). LNAPE (N-(FA18:1)/18:2)  
379 is abundant in red seabream, LNAPE (N-(FA20:4)/22:6) and LNAPE (N-(FA16:0)/16:1)  
380 were abundant in blackin flounder. LNAPE (N-(FA16:0)/20:5), LNAPE (N-(FA18:1)/20:5),  
381 and LNAPE (N-(FA17:1)/20:5) were abundant in Japanese pond smelt, whereas LNAPE (N-  
382 (FA18:3)/20:5) and LPE (N-(FA17:1)/20:5) were abundant in Japanese sardine. The  
383 abundance of PUFAs as LNAPEs acyl chains suggest that these lipids are also a potential  
384 source of dietary PUFAs. To the best of our knowledge, the present study is the first to



385 characterize and demonstrate the relative levels of LNAPEs in multiple fish types. Further  
386 investigations are necessary to determine their biological effects.

### 387 **3.5. Hierarchical cluster analysis of complex lipids profiled in eleven types of fish**

388 Hierarchical clustering heatmaps visualizes the concentrations of complex lipids detected in  
389 fish fillets. The visualization of lipids such as phosphatidylcholines (PC), phosphatidylserine  
390 (PS), phosphatidylinositol (PI), phosphatidylglycerols (PG), and cardiolipins (CL) in eleven  
391 types of fish is represented by a heatmap and is shown in **Fig 6a, 6b**. A tight clustering  
392 among the sample groups was observed. The concentration of PC, PS, and PI was  
393 relatively higher in Japanese pond smelt and Lindberg skate compared to other fish types.  
394 These phospholipids are highly enriched with PUFAs such as FA 22:6, FA 20:5, and FA  
395 20:4. Hence, these membrane lipids could be the potential sources of PUFAs in the diet.  
396 Moreover, fish-derived  $\omega$ -3 PUFAs were reported to significantly affect intestinal microbiota  
397 and regulate immune function (Parolini, 2019).

398 The energy metabolism associated lipids, such as PGs and CLs, were relatively high in  
399 shishamo smelt. Further, lipids such as Cer, SM, CE, MAG, DAG, TAG, and NAE in eleven  
400 types of fish are visualized by a heatmap, and the results are illustrated in **Fig 6c,6d**. The  
401 concentration of sphingolipids (Cer and SM) and sterols (CE) was higher in Japanese pond  
402 smelt whereas that of MAG, DAGs, and TAGs was higher in shishamo smelt. Remarkably,  
403 TAGs were also enriched with many PUFAs as acyl chains. The NAE lipids were relatively  
404 high in shishamo smelt and saffron cod. NAEs are a functionally diverse family of signaling  
405 lipids that have been implicated as metabolic signals regulating the nutritional status and  
406 lifespan (Lucanic et al., 2011). These lipids may have important implications for biomedical  
407 research on aging and obesity (De Petrocellis & Di Marzo, 2011). A previous study  
408 demonstrated the application of the untargeted technique for comprehensive lipid profiling  
409 in round scad (He et al., 2020) and sea urchin (Zhou et al., 2018); several studies focused  
410 on profiling specific lipids such as phospholipids (Yeo & Parrish, 2021; Zang et al., 2018) or

411 fatty acids (Devadason et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2020) in various other fish types. However,  
412 no evident studies have demonstrated a comprehensive profile of lipids in the fish types  
413 explored in the present study.

#### 414 **4. Conclusion**

415 In summary, various lipid species and their relative content in the eleven types of fish were  
416 analyzed using UHPLC/LTQ-Orbitrap MS. GP was the most abundant lipid class in many  
417 groups. The PUFAs, P:S ratio, and HPI was significantly higher in shishamo smelt,  
418 suggesting it as a potential health-beneficial dietary fish type. The previously  
419 uncharacterized and biologically beneficial lipids such as LNAPEs were detected and  
420 characterized for the first time in fish fillets. In addition, the comprehensive profile of multiple  
421 lipid classes and their distribution among each fish type was revealed by the cluster  
422 correlation analysis. Shishamo smelt was enriched with TAGs, and Japanese sardines had  
423 a relatively large amount of PC, PI, SM, and CEs. Therefore, lipids in dietary fishes can  
424 account for their nutritional and health-beneficial functions. Because exploring the sources  
425 of these lipids is of significant interest, we aim to apply the untargeted technique to  
426 determine the unidentified lipids in other food types.

#### 427 **CRedit authorship contribution statement**

428 Siddabasave Gowda B. Gowda: Conceptualization, Methodology, Supervision, Writing -  
429 original draft. Yusuke Minami: Formal analysis, Visualization, Writing - original draft.  
430 Divyavani Gowda: Data curation, visualization, Writing - review & editing. Hitoshi Chiba:  
431 Supervision, Writing - review & editing. Shu-Ping Hui: Supervision, Resources, Writing -  
432 review & editing.

#### 433 **Declaration of Competing Interest**

434 The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal  
435 relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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600 **Table 1:** Amount (mg/100 g of fillet) of lipid characterized in eleven types of dietary fish. (A-  
601 LPE: Alkyl lysophosphatidylethanolamine, AA-PE: Alkyl acyl phosphatidylethanolamine)

Lipids	Red seabream	Flatfish	Okhotsk atka mackerel	Japanese sardine	Blacklin flounder	Lindberg skate	Skipjack tuna	Saffron cod	Shishamo smelt	Pacific cod	Japanese pond smelt
<b>LPC</b>	4.17±0.28	0.09±0.00	0.43±0.10	2.29±0.05	2.25±0.18	0.04±0.01	1.35±0.11	0.40±0.05	0.56±0.03	3.20±0.37	1.31±0.22
<b>LPE</b>	0.23±0.01	0.08±0.00	0.57±0.00	0.59±0.03	1.33±0.04	0.15±0.01	0.19±0.02	0.44±0.01	0.51±0.02	0.17±0.01	0.53±0.01
<b>A-LPE</b>	0.03±0.00	0.04±0.00	0.02±0.00	0.01±0.00	0.39±0.01	0.04±0.00	0.09±0.01	0.29±0.02	0.28±0.01	0.06±0.00	0.22±0.01
<b>LNAPE</b>	0.25±0.01	0.33±0.03	0.44±0.02	0.75±0.02	0.75±0.02	0.25±0.00	0.19±0.01	0.15±0.00	0.34±0.02	0.39±0.02	0.83±0.03
<b>LPI</b>	-	-	0.01±0.00	0.01±0.00	0.05±0.01	0.01±0.00	0.01±0.00	0.03±0.00	0.04±0.00	0.03±0.01	0.02±0.01
<b>PC</b>	42.3±2.39	25.05±0.57	20.44±2.29	25.46±1.84	21.36±1.52	53.24±1.95	16.93±2.33	4.06±0.33	23.47±0.97	4.18±0.22	197.01±10.49
<b>AA-PC</b>	10.12±0.13	8.53±0.20	8.52±1.26	8.68±0.55	5.98±0.47	17.74±3.7	11.59±2.02	1.53±0.07	6.69±0.61	2.46±0.12	10.84±2.23
<b>PE</b>	9.95±0.58	6.12±0.19	12.9±2.58	17.78±0.90	8.54±0.80	20.86±2.95	1.62±0.20	0.77±0.01	4.98±0.17	1.52±0.08	11.60±0.20
<b>AA-PE</b>	3.98±0.21	3.00±0.14	2.28±0.47	3.01±0.16	3.80±0.42	13.16±1.99	3.05±0.36	0.49±0.01	1.94±0.06	0.69±0.04	4.22±0.03
<b>PS</b>	1.81±0.07	1.85±0.07	1.44±0.04	1.95±0.05	1.69±0.05	2.23±0.05	1.33±0.14	0.88±0.01	1.72±0.04	0.27±0.01	1.51±0.04
<b>PI</b>	3.27±0.73	3.07±0.07	1.83±0.04	5.43±0.10	3.17±0.06	3.03±0.07	2.32±0.21	2.13±0.04	2.46±0.07	0.55±0.02	11.17±0.15
<b>PG</b>	0.04±0.00	0.02±0.00	0.01±0.01	0.14±0.00	0.08±0.00	0.04±0.00	0.07±0.01	0.08±0.00	0.32±0.01	0.01±0.00	0.20±0.01
<b>CL</b>	0.62±0.03	0.11±0.00	0.06±0.00	0.33±0.01	0.11±0.01	0.34±0.02	0.21±0.02	0.08±0.00	0.17±0.01	0.11±0.01	0.35±0.01
<b>Cer</b>	1.16±0.50	1.03±0.09	0.75±0.11	1.39±0.06	1.94±0.04	1.27±0.16	0.29±0.04	0.30±0.01	3.02±0.15	0.61±0.05	10.21±0.94
<b>SM</b>	14.72±2.06	16.56±1.06	5.28±1.54	14.88±1.92	21.31±0.57	12.00±1.56	6.05±0.88	1.53±0.25	9.79±0.36	0.75±0.07	299.00±38.36
<b>CE</b>	1.25±0.39	3.67±0.18	1.54±0.03	2.52±0.46	31.56±2.23	10.09±1.16	1.99±0.11	6.54±0.61	37.43±7.8	64.27±4.60	210.94±31.76
<b>MAG</b>	0.11±0.00	0.08±0.01	0.14±0.01	0.16±0.01	0.02±0.00	0.03±0.00	0.12±0.03	0.15±0.01	1.29±0.04	0.06±0.00	0.32±0.01
<b>NAE</b>	0.17±0.01	0.52±0.03	1.28±0.06	0.45±0.02	1.46±0.02	0.20±0.01	0.16±0.01	1.92±0.10	2.16±0.06	1.78±0.07	1.14±0.00
<b>TAG</b>	98.16±9.61	0.16±0.00	2.79±0.07	182.33±11.09	0.15±0.01	0.16±0.01	0.11±0.03	0.34±0.06	845.60±0.06	0.47±0.04	329.68±13.55
<b>Total lipid (mg/100g)</b>	192.34±17.03	70.33±2.63	60.82±8.65	268.16±17.28	105.96±6.45	134.89±13.64	47.68±6.55	22.11±1.58	942.77±133.26	81.56±5.74	1124.43±98.67

602 **Figure legends:**

603 **Fig 1** Multivariant analysis of lipid metabolites annotated in fish fillet samples. **a.** One-way  
604 ANOVA analysis of 287 identified lipid molecular species (Tukey's HSD with  $p < 0.05$ ). **b.**  
605 Principal component analysis score plot and loadings plot of lipid metabolites from eleven  
606 fish types.

607 **Fig 2** Distribution of lipid classes and fatty acid compositions. **a.** Percentage distribution of  
608 five major lipid classes in eleven fish types (GP: Glycerophospholipids, SP: Sphingolipids,  
609 GL: Glycerolipids, FA: Fatty acyls, St: Sterols). **b.** Fatty acid composition a based-on  
610 unsaturation in eleven fish types ( $p < 0.05$ , are considered as statistically significant. The  
611 groups which are significant are shown here: **SFA:**  $a_1-[c_1, e_1, h_1, i_1, j_1, k_1]$  i.e. group a1 is  
612 significantly different with the groups shown in square bracket,  $b_1-[c_1, e_1, h_1, i_1, j_1, k_1]$ ,  $c_1-$   
613  $[d_1, f_1, g_1, h_1, i_1]$ ,  $d_1-[e_1, h_1, i_1, j_1, k_1]$ ,  $e_1[f_1, g_1, h_1, i_1]$ ,  $f_1-[h_1, i_1, j_1, k_1]$ ,  $g_1-[h_1, i_1, j_1, k_1]$ ,  $h_1-[i_1, j_1, k_1]$ ,  $i-[j, k]$ .  
614 **MUFA:**  $a_2-[e_2, h_2, i_2, j_2, k_2]$ ,  $b_2-[e_2, h_2, i_2, j_2, k_2]$ ,  $c_2-[d_2, f_2, g_2, h_2, i_2, j_2, k_2]$ ,  $d_2-[e_2, h_2, i_2, j_2, k_2]$ ,  $e_2[f_2, g_2, h_2, i_2, j_2]$ ,  
615  $f_2-[h_2, i_2, j_2, k_2]$ ,  $g_2-[h_2, i_2, j_2, k_2]$ ,  $h_2-[i_2, j_2, k_2]$ ,  $i_2-[j_2, k_2]$ ,  $j_2-k_2$ . **PUFA:**  $a_3-[c_3, e_3, h_3, i_3, j_3, k_3]$ ,  $b_3-$   
616  $[c_3, e_3, h_3, i_3, j_3, k_3]$ ,  $c_3-[d_3, e_3, f_3, g_3, h_3, i_3, j_3]$ ,  $d_3-[e_3, h_3, i_3, j_3, k_3]$ ,  $e_3[f_3, g_3, h_3, i_3, j_3, k_3]$ ,  $f_3-[h_3, i_3, j_3, k_3]$ ,  $g_3-$   
617  $[h_3, i_3, j_3, k_3]$ ,  $h_3-[i_3, j_3, k_3]$ ,  $i_3-[j_3, k_3]$ ,  $j_3-k_3$ . **c.** PUFA to MUFA ratio (P:S) in dietary fish [ $a_0-$   
618  $[c_0, e_0, g_0, h_0, i_0, j_0, k_0]$ ,  $b_0-[c_0, e_0, f_0, g_0, h_0, i_0, j_0]$ ,  $c_0-[d_0, e_0, f_0, g_0, h_0, i_0, j_0, k_0]$ ,  $d_0-[e_0, h_0, i_0, j_0, k_0]$ ,  $e_0-$   
619  $[f_0, g_0, h_0, i_0, k_0]$ ,  $f_0-[h_0, i_0, j_0, k_0]$ ,  $g_0-[h_0, i_0, j_0, k_0]$ ,  $h_0-[i_0, j_0, k_0]$ ,  $i_0-[j_0, k_0]$ ,  $j_0-k_0$ ]. (Blackin founder

620 **Fig 3** Heatmap visualization of free fatty acids and evaluation of nutritional indices of fish. **a.**  
621 Hierarchical cluster correlation analysis of free fatty acids, **b.** Index of atherogenicity [IA], **c.**  
622 Health promotion index [HPI], **d.** Hypo/Hyper-cholesterolemic ratio [HH], and **e.** Fish lipid  
623 quality [FLQ]. (Pacific cod (PC), saffron cod (SC), Lindberg skate (LS), blackin flounder (BF),  
624 Japanese sardine (JS), Japanese pond smelt (JP), red seabream (RB), flatfish (FF),  
625 shishamo smelt (SS), skipjack tuna (ST), and Okhotsk Atka mackerel (OM).

626 **Fig 4 a.** Extracted ion chromatograms of LNAPEs **b.** Hierarchical cluster correlation analysis  
627 of lyso-phospholipids detected in fish fillet samples.

628 **Fig 5** The MS and MS/MS spectra of LNAPEs detected in various fish types [\*isomeric  
629 mixture].

630 **Fig 6** Hierarchical cluster correlation analysis of glycerophospholipids. **a.** PC and PS. **b.** PI,  
631 PG, and CL **c.** sphingolipids, N-acyl ethanol amines, cholesterol esters, mono- and di-  
632 acylglycerols. **d.** Triacylglycerols characterized in eleven fish types. (clustering method: ward,  
633 distance measure: Euclidean)

## Figures

**Fig 1**

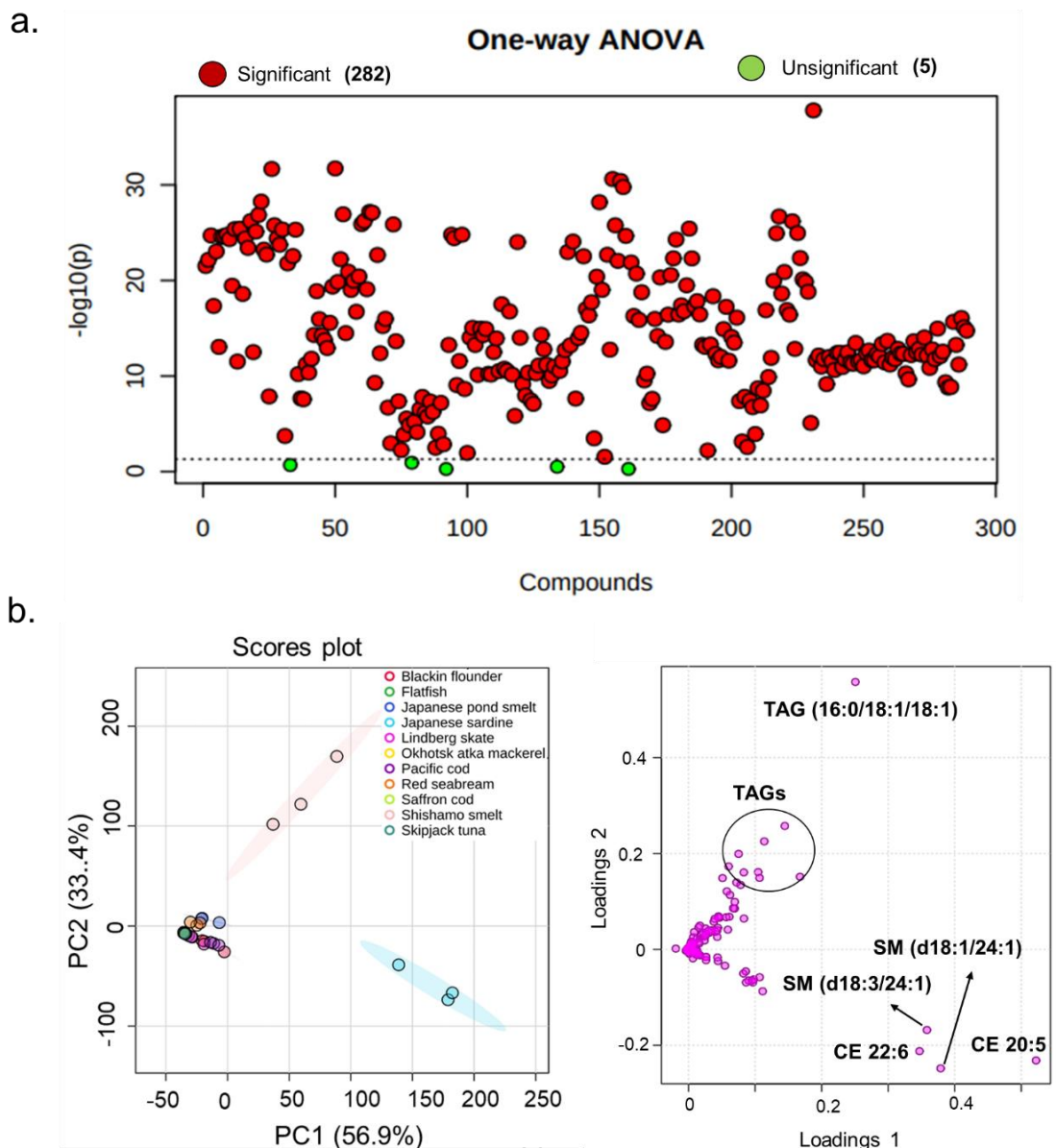
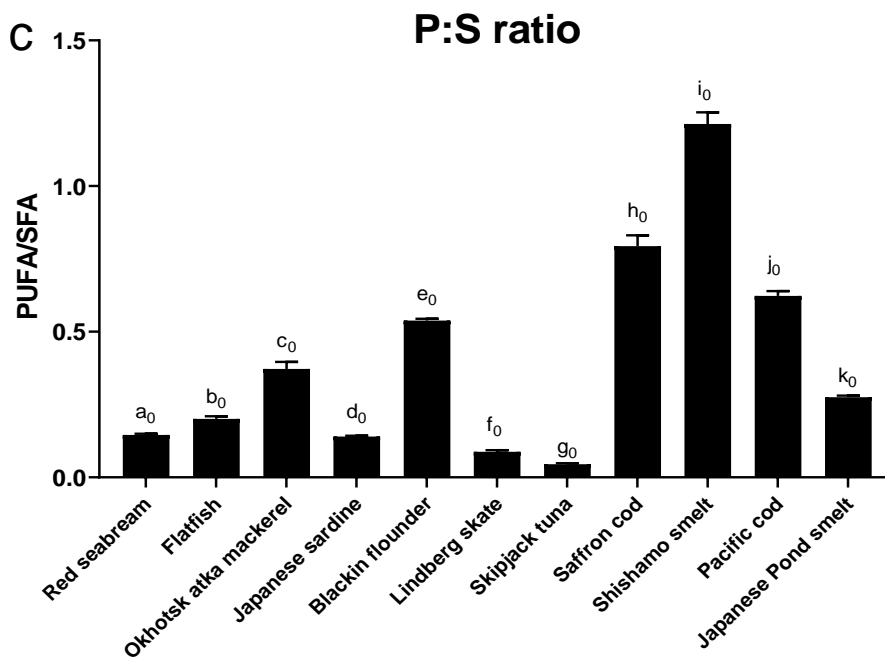
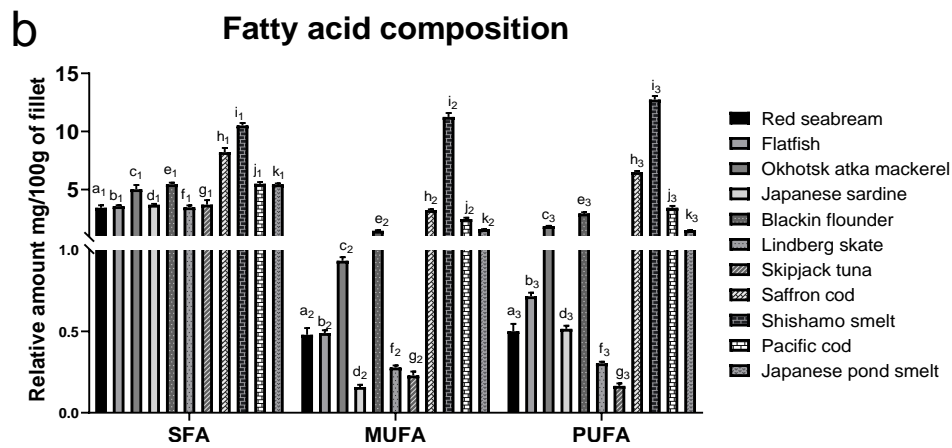
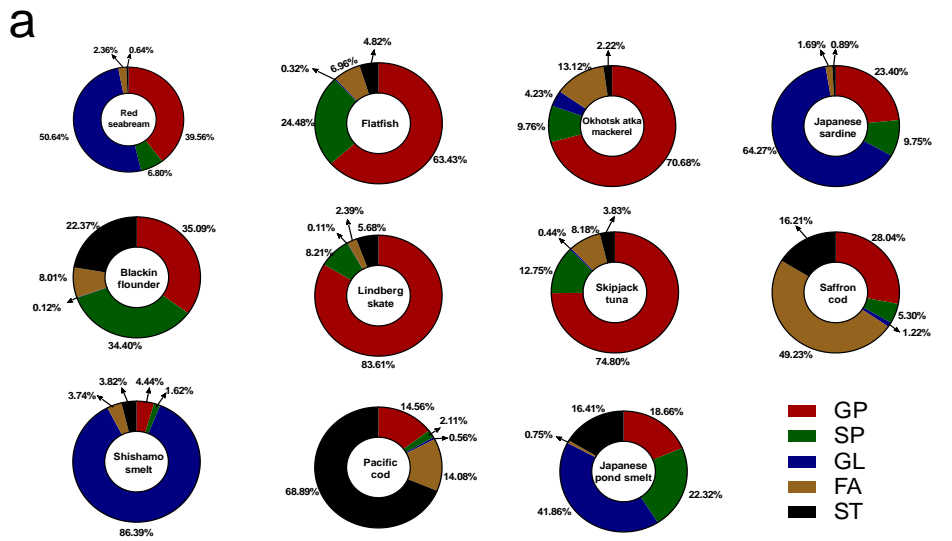
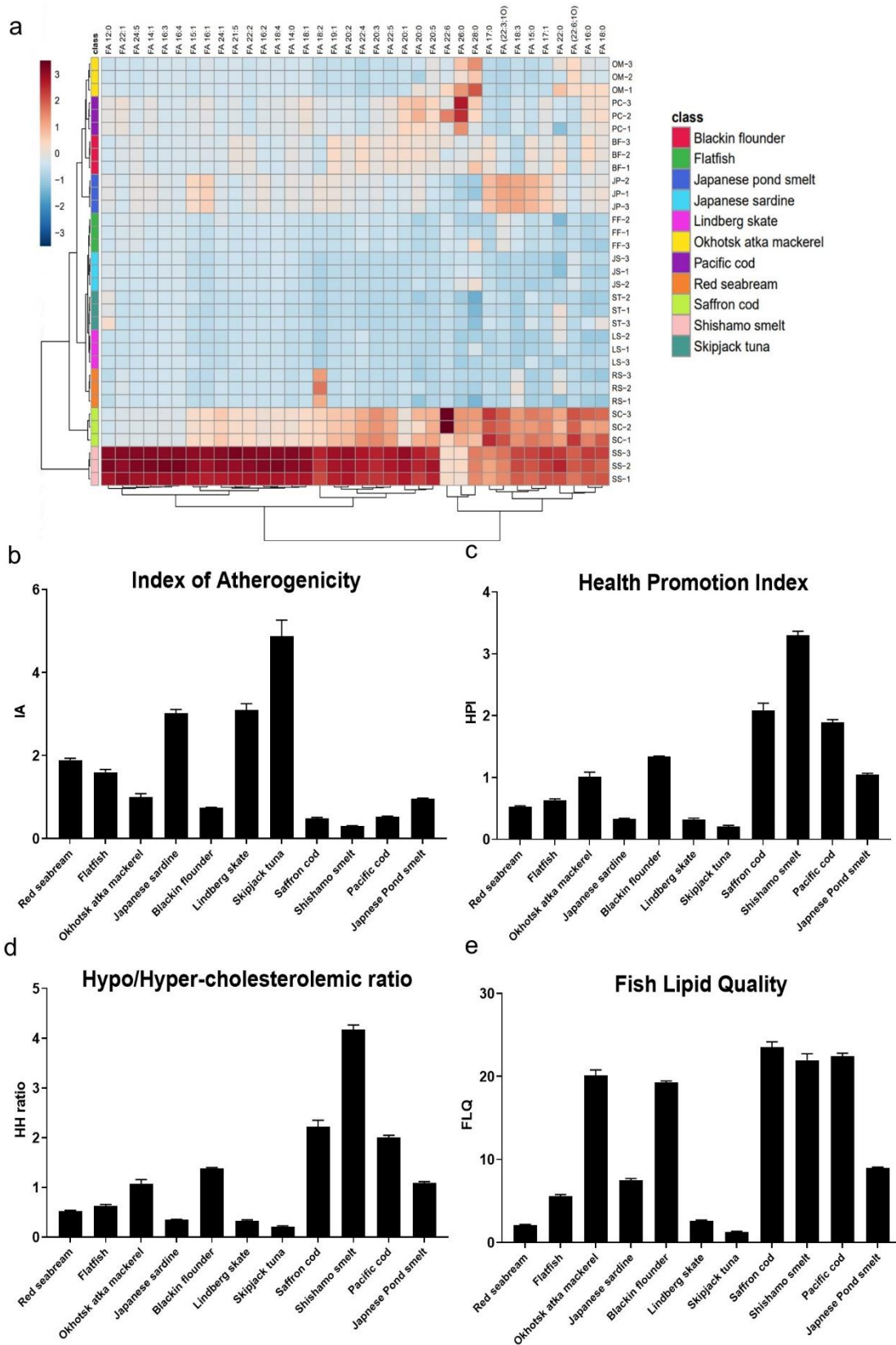


Fig 2

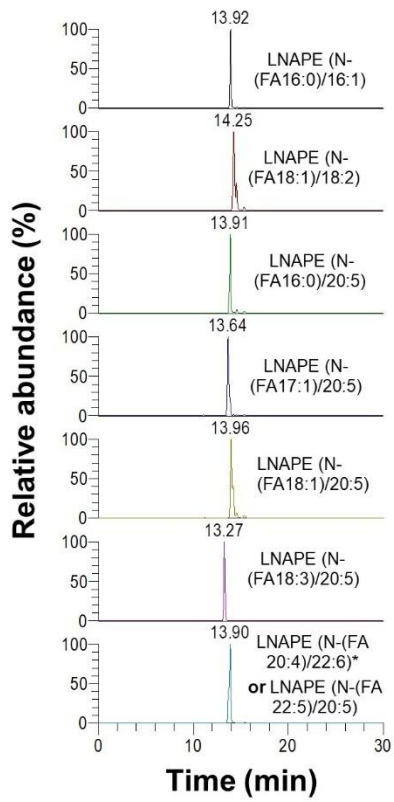


**Fig 3**



**Fig 4**

**a.**



**b.**

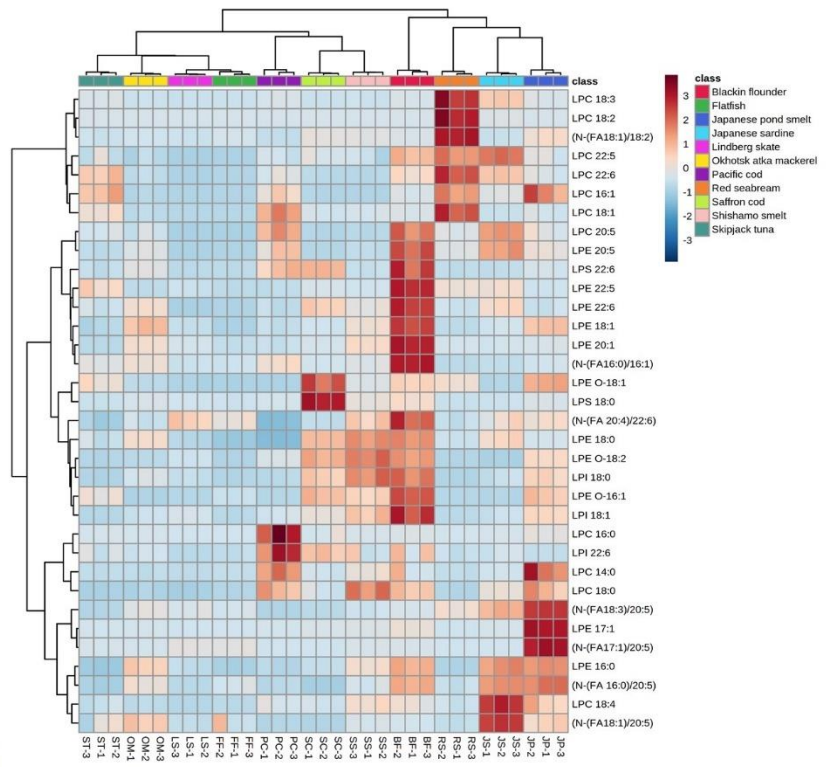


Fig 5

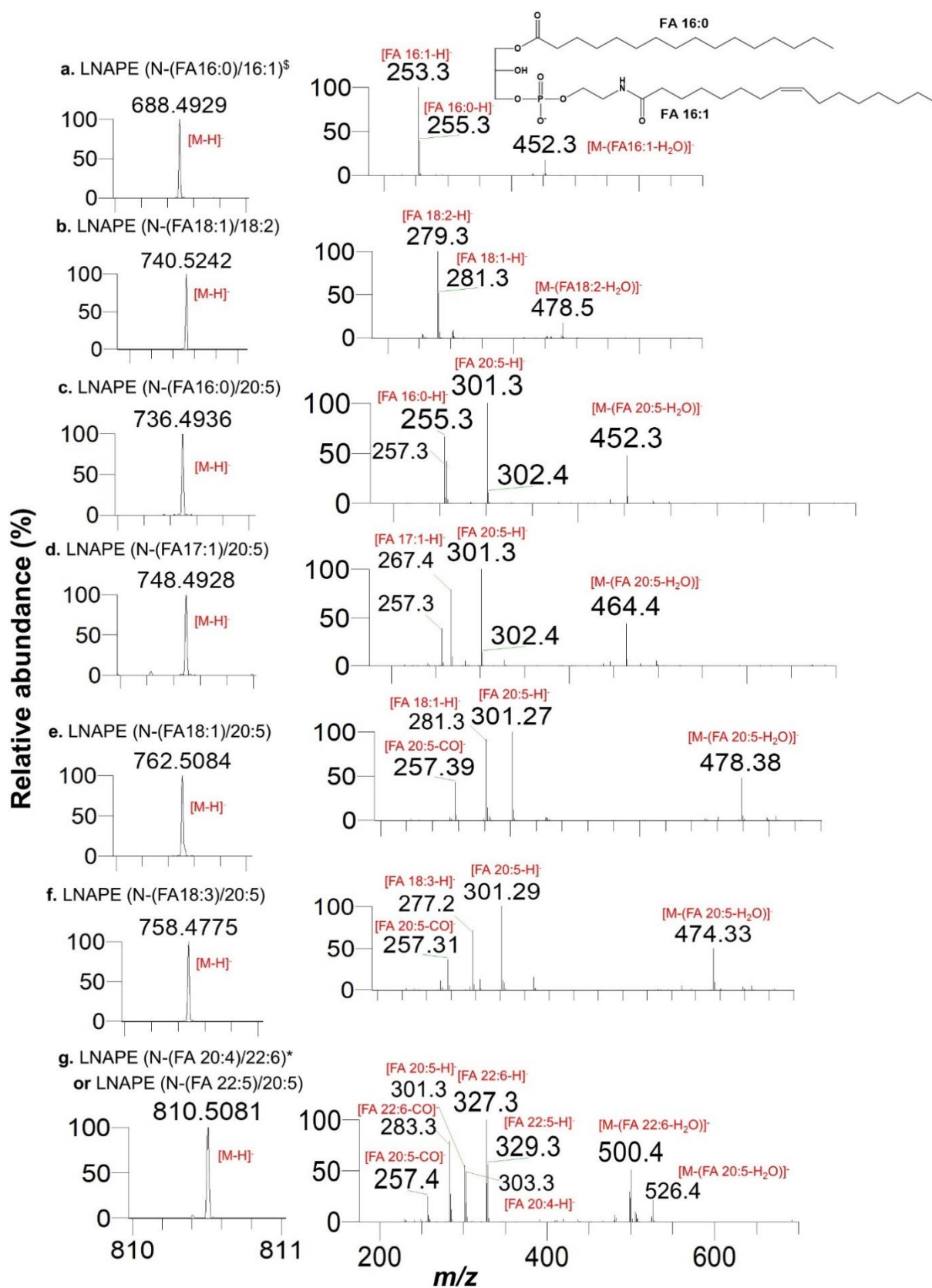
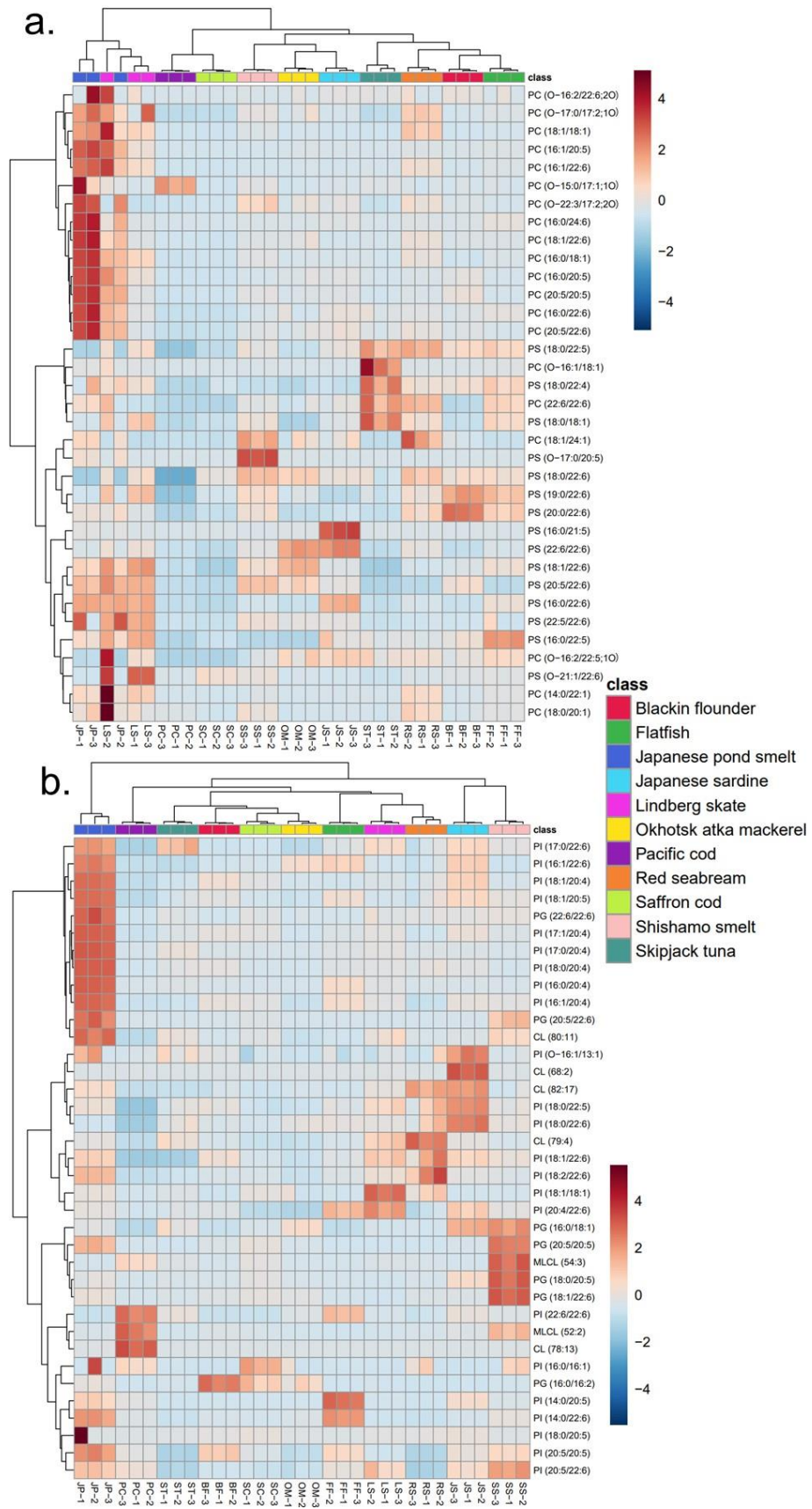
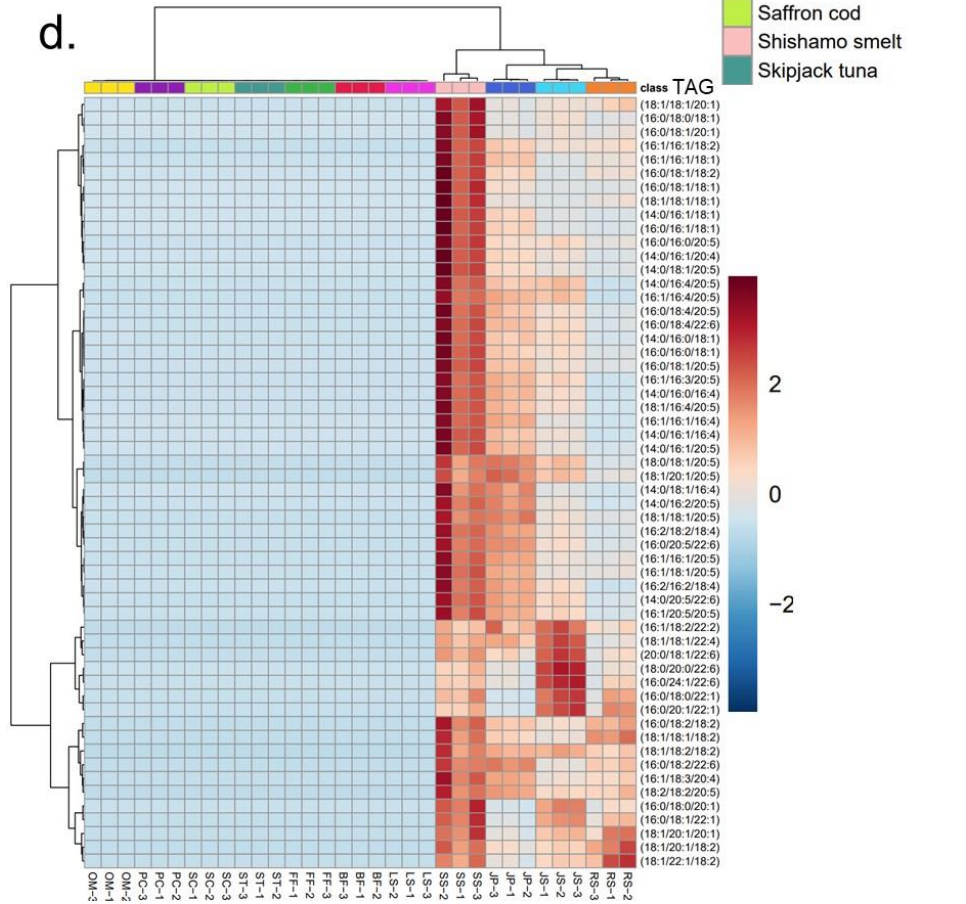
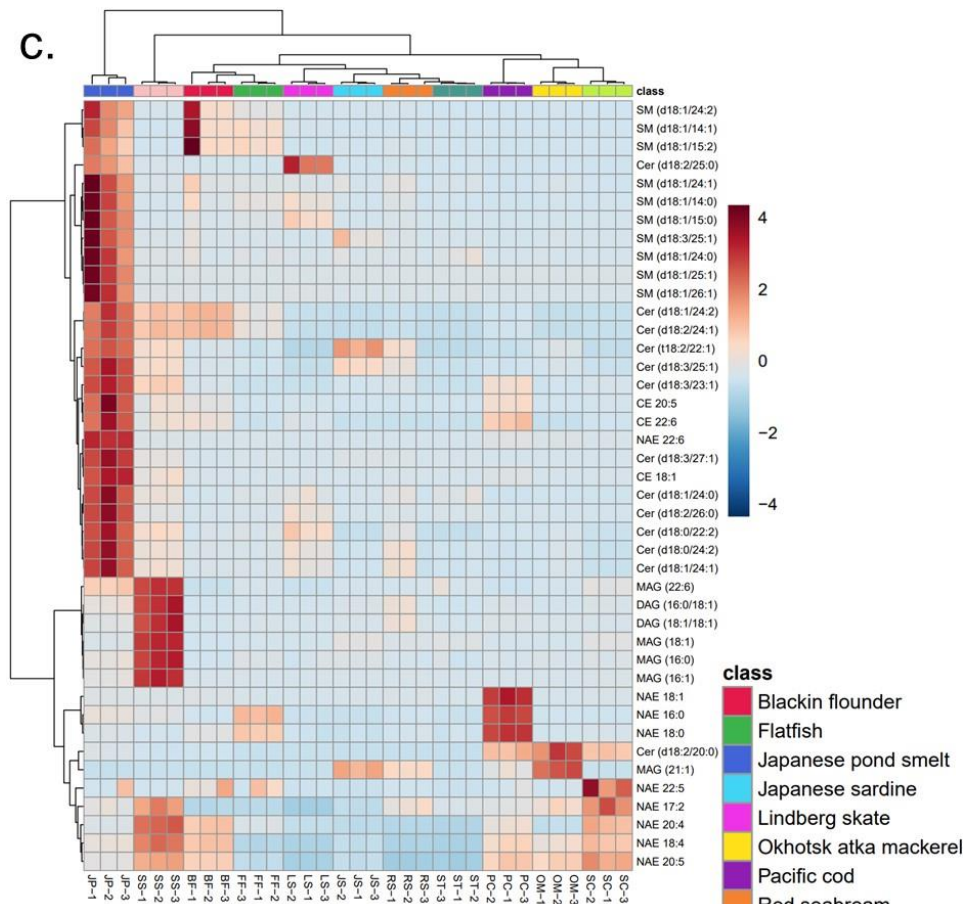




Fig 6





# Graphical Abstract

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