

The future of **Mediterranean aquaculture**

Technology fuels growth

The third multi-stakeholder consultation of the Aquainnova project took place in Madrid on 16 and 17 November 2011.

The workshop addressed the future of Mediterranean aquaculture and brought together 40 key stakeholders from eleven countries, mainly representatives of EU but also some non-EU countries (e.g. Israel, Croatia) that surround the Mediterranean Sea. Fish farmers and aquaculture associations, government representatives, research institutions, research funding agencies and other stakeholders in the sector had the opportunity to present and discuss their views during the 1.5 days event. The workshop was organised in several thematic sessions, laying strong emphasis on discussion and consensus building.

Financed by the EU FP7 programme, the objectives of Aquainnova are several: to facilitate the dialogue between the aquaculture industry, the research community and the policy makers; to exploit the potential for innovation and technological development in European aquaculture through active promotion of the exploitation, dissemination and communication of the results of aquaculture Research and Technological Development (RTD); to improve how RTD and innovation knowledge is managed, disseminated and transferred.

Organised by the European Technology and Innovation Platform - EATiP an international non-profit association dedicated

to developing, supporting and promoting aquaculture focusing on **technology** and **innovation** in aquaculture in Europe, the consultation provided a lively and open dialogue on European policies and how these affect European aquaculture.

To do the right things right

Through a video presentation the EATiP Chairman, Mr. Gustavo Larrazábal provided a broad picture of European policies and how these affect the sustainable development of European aquaculture. He also reminded the participants on the motivations and goals for creating EATiP as well as the vision for the European aquaculture developed within Aquainnova and how to fit these goals within Mediterranean aquaculture. "I want to contribute to society, to give back on my business success. In Europe we are on the right track to tackle the innovation challenges, but we need to deliver the message, to communicate it properly, we need to do the right things right".

European aquaculture, including the Mediterranean contributions, will be not challenge-free in the next 10-20 years: a rapidly-growing global population will increase the pressure on raw material availability (i.e. for fish and animal feeds), increasing global demand for seafood, combined with the decrease of capture fisheries, and the need



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to improve the image of aquaculture among consumers, are just a few of the issues that have to be faced. However, the combination of a strong market for seafood, the history of fish farming, dynamic and advanced research, a qualified and well-trained labour force, and a good position in relation to its increased integration in the reformed Common Fisheries Policies (CFP), there is confidence that the future growth of European aquaculture will be sustainable.

What is your vision for aquaculture in 2030?

This was the first key question that participants had to reflect and comment on, from all possible perspectives: production, consumption, technology, feed, social-economics, knowledge management, environment, etc. After committed work and debates, the general consensus among participants was that Mediterranean aquaculture production will grow by 50% or more by 2030, within the context of global aquaculture growth that was anticipated at 100% or more. A few new robust species will be farmed, customised to suit market demand and the environment. Fish feed will be produced by growing low cost animals and plants and new resources will be utilized. There was a strong belief among scientists in the future of integrated multifunctional farms, based on sea cage aquaculture development. Husbandry will become remote, automated and multi-functional, but there are also challenges here that have not been addressed to date.

Aquaculture will not only be socially acceptable but socially demanded, both for its demonstrated health benefits and food security, as well as to meet the growing seafood demand with improved ethical and environmental standards. These

desiderates however, require the continued 'education' of consumers. The public needs unbiased, transparent, and better communicated scientifically-based information, not only from the media, but also from sectoral organisations, administration and politicians. Knowledge and proactive quality communication throughout the value chain are prerequisites.

European aquaculture is so diverse that there is no single opinion or solution. However, most of the participants agreed that European aquaculture may be seen as a 'niche' activity when over seventy percent of aquatic products consumed in the EU are imported. Notwithstanding this, there should be one common communication strategy on key topics such as health, environmental standards, food safety and quality.

An asset for aquaculture development

It is no doubt that the role of aquaculture will be reinforced in the future CFP and there is consensus that European aquaculture, including the Mediterranean, should be driven by key factors – such as innovation, diversification, promotion and communication. However, to maintain sustainable growth and profitability, the sector needs higher cooperation between professionals and scientists, policy makers, with real innovation and effective technology transfer, which are indeed needed for fundamental change.

Mr Alejandro Tiana Mas of INDEMAR, Spain believes that "the EATIP workshop on Mediterranean aquaculture has collected a good deal of wishful thinking from the participants, yet some key actors in the implementation of aquaculture policies were missing. Promoting this kind of



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After Madrid (pictured) Aquainnova met in Bordeaux on 15-16 February and will have the wrap-up meeting in Brussels in June 2012.

sector workshop and seminars to exchange points of view and analyse the state of affairs is an asset for aquaculture development, but they must encourage participation of competent authorities, if any of the widely supported proposals to ameliorate the sector is to be incorporated into fisheries and aquaculture regulations."

An open debate and friendly discussions

"Aquaculture activities have a long tradition and give significant social and economic value for the Republic of Croatia. As a participant from a country, whose membership of the European community is expected to be realised in the nearest future, I find more than useful all the information gained and the visions on the aquaculture development perspectives that were discussed. It was a new and really unique experience for me and it was a real pleasure to be a part of this workshop, which successfully managed to gather around the same table the representatives of the industry, research institutions, government-

tal bodies and other stakeholders in aquaculture sector. We all had the opportunity to express our opinions through an open debate and friendly discussions, aiming at setting up the best possible tools to achieve the goals foreseen under the scope of European aquaculture development in next few decades" is the opinion of Ms. Tatjana Boroša Pecigoš, Ministry of Agriculture – Directorate of Fisheries, Croatia.

The EATIP Chairman, who at the end of the workshop, thanked the participants for their enthusiasm and the quality of their inputs, which have been since incorporated into the Aquainnova documents, has also reminded that the Vision documents as well as the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda and Action Plans are available for consultation on the EATIP website, www.eatip.eu. The individual workshop reports are also published on these pages.

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