

CONSENSUS

A Multi-Stakeholder Platform for Sustainable Aquaculture in Europe

The Challenge

Over the last decades, rising demand for seafood and decreasing supply from fisheries have caused aquaculture of fish and molluscs to expand at a rapid pace. The expansion has brought with it a number of environmental and socio-economic issues, which impact the sustainability of the sector. In support of this, the European Commission has set out a "Strategy for Sustainable Development of Aquaculture". Reaching the status of a stable aquaculture industry means ensuring that aquaculture is not only economically and environmentally sustainable, but that it has the confidence and support of all stakeholders including, and most importantly, the consumers of seafood. A major challenge to the European aquaculture industry is therefore the provision of information and accompanying codes of practice that generate consumer dialogue, acceptance and consumer confidence.

Project Objective

CONSENSUS is a platform for sustainable aquaculture in Europe, created with the specific objective of demonstrating the benefits of high quality, safe and nutritious farmed fish and shellfish grown under sustainable conditions.

CONSENSUS brought together all relevant stakeholders, including producer associations, NGOs, consumers and scientists from different disciplines from all European regions. The platform was chaired by the European Consumers Organisation BEUC and was coordinated by the European Aquaculture Society.

Key Points

CONSENSUS provided:

- a source of balanced information for consumers on the benefits of high quality aquaculture processes and products;
- a central point, or hub, bringing together European networks, European initiatives, and European research and technological development;
- an interface between the different stakeholders to facilitate and support dialogue and exchange.

Through a process of stakeholder involvement and consultation (120 stakeholders from 16 countries) CONSENSUS developed a number of desired trends for the sustainable development of the industry and supporting indicators by which those trends could be measured.



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EATiP Thematic Area of Relevance

TA1: Product Quality, Consumer Safety and Health

TA2: Technology and Systems

TA3: Managing the Biological Lifecycle

TA4: Sustainable Feed Production

TA5: Integration with the Environment

TA6: Knowledge Management

TA7: Aquatic Animal Health and Welfare

TA8: Socio-Economics and Management

Key Words

Sustainable aquaculture, stakeholders, indicators, best practice, benchmarking, consumers

Project Information

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Output Highlights

CONSENSUS stakeholders generated 78 original indicators for sustainable aquaculture practices. Of these, 25 can contribute to Codes of Best Practice at national or species level and 30 have been identified for benchmarking of the sector, with a potential use in European standards.

CONSENSUS also developed balanced information for consumers, showing the benefits of sustainable European aquaculture and its products, with the firm message that aquaculture is the only way to fill the gap between supply and demand for seafood. Messages on aquaculture sustainability were tested in 3 countries and used as a basis for an information brochure targeted at the 40 member organisations of the European Consumers' Organisation (BEUC) and the Euroconsumers network.

A YouTube channel (<http://www.youtube.com/user/euraquaculture>) was also made, showing 15 videos of what sustainability means to aquaculture producers across Europe. Videos on the channel have been viewed more than 40 000 times.

The Full Report:

The CONSENSUS website contains information on sustainable aquaculture; how it can be measured and how the initiative can be put into context. <http://www.euraquaculture.info/>

Next Steps – Suggested Actions/Follow On



Industry

- The final set of indicators has been shared with the FAO, with GlobalGAP and with the WWF Aquaculture Dialogues as an input to aquaculture standards. Some of the economic indicators can also be used as an input to a potential aquaculture observatory that will help producers benchmark and provide valuable data on the development of the sector.



Policy

- CONSENSUS indicators may be used in national or European strategies for aquaculture development.



Society

- Consumer associations across Europe are being solicited for more information about aquaculture, as it becomes more widely visible to consumers. The CONSENSUS brochure is a starting point, but needs to be developed by regular contact with consumer organisations to highlight issues; provide science based information on those issues and identify comparative tests that can be made by consumer organisations for their subscribers.