NOTE - EATiP feedback on the role of Bioeconomy in the EU post COVID recovery

EATiP has been invited to contribute to the debate on the "**Role of bioeconomy in the EU post-COVID recovery**", taking place on **22 September from 11:45 until 12:45** as part of the European Research and Innovation Days.

The objective of this virtual webinar is to outline the potential of the bioeconomy for the post-COVID rural, coastal and urban recovery. Jointly, we will look into ways, ideas and plans on how to most effectively deploy concrete bioeconomy actions and solutions for a speedy recovery across Europe. This session will focus on EU Member States and their efforts to recover, repair and emerge stronger from the crisis, while accelerating the green transition. Future discussions and events on this topic will follow in the months to come.

Main message: if Europe is to become more self-sufficient, the aqua-food sector needs to grow. Social licenses are obtained through increased public awareness of the advantages of seafood in a health and environmental context.

There has been a need to access reliable information about regulations, financial support, framework to operate in. Regional/national company clusters and associations have been vital in this process to overcome this period. They have changed to attention from informing the companies on COVID-related issues to promoting innovation as main strategy for the coming critical years.

A lack of harmonization of business support programmes between European countries was experienced.

General trend: Covid-19 crisis further increased the grade of complexity in managing aqua farms.

- large and high-competence companies (e.g. salmon farms) are implementing precision farming and are speeding up digitisation: automation, remote operations. It is outsourcing high-tech, specialised services. The smart innovations generated by technology frontrunners need to be adapted to the needs of smaller companies
- small enterprises (e.g. shellfish farms) lack time, competence making it difficult to access technology and funding. Organisations and clusters are needed to link individual enterprises to funding mechanisms, innovation tools and competent staff. Increased complexity at EU level (policy, regulations, access to funding) is disadvantaging small companies – which are the backbone of aquaculture farming in Europe

Main issues:

- Importance of a higher degree of European self-sufficiency of seafood and its supporting services and goods (feed, technology) requires harmonisation of licenses and a stronger social acceptance of aquaculture

- The crisis induced a shift towards locally produced food, frozen food and products customized to home market. This transition deserves further attention.
- Traceability and transparency throughout the value chain with stronger focus on hygienic standards, sanitation
- The industry is looking for new production systems that are more competitive and environmentally sustainable, e.g. with sites offshore and on-land recirculation systems
- Need for an open innovation for the future: experience and knowledge exchange, where multi-stakeholder clusters play a strong role
- Need to accelerate the development of novel sustainable feed ingredients that can be locally produced to avoid potential logistic disruption of long-travelled raw materials. New biotechnologies may empower this acceleration, provided these are regulated in an science-based way.
- Aquaculture needs to be recognised as an integrated part of the food system: enhancing synergies on e.g. use of by-product uses, feeds, eco-, regional and quality labels, commodities, implementation of circular economy and industrial ecology (e.g. FLAGs), use of common social and environmental targets. Aquaculture is an important part of the promotion of the future agro-ecology EU plan.

This note is based on the views of the European Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Platform corporate members and its Mirror Platforms. See www.eatip.eu.

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EATiP Secretariat