

**Federation of European Aquaculture Producers'
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"Integrating Aquaculture"

Ernesto Penas Lado's Keynote Speech

10-15min, 1,100 words

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to open *Aquaculture in motion 2015*. This conference comes at a time when aquaculture's integration is gaining momentum and acceptance.

Commissioner Vella has been in office for a year now, and his role in both environment and maritime affairs is evident by the efforts to interlink blue and green growth.

The integration of aquaculture as part of the answer for a greener environment, and a sustainable supply of fish feature prominently in Commissioner Vella's mandate. This is about facilitating sustainable growth in production and delivering more jobs in Europe.

The EU aquaculture industry started this year bringing about 3.5 billion euro to the EU economy and employing 85,000 people.

Member States have stated their ambitions for their aquaculture sectors in their Multiannual National Plans. We have also received the Operational Programmes for the EMFF, which detail how Member States intend to spend the available funds to meet their objectives.

Over 20%, or more than 1.2 billion euro, of the EMFF fund has been approved for allocation *directly* to the sustainable development of aquaculture. This money will go to on-farm innovations, investments in equipment, services, staff training, stock insurance and so on.

But that is not all. There are other priorities of the EMFF which will also contribute to boosting aquaculture, such as spending on marketing and processing, which will receive another billion euro. Meanwhile, cutting edge research and innovation projects continue to be funded in the background, delivering knowledge and tools to the front line.

Over the coming years this targeted spending should provide the necessary support to grow the sector beyond the starting point of last year.

Integration of aquaculture is essential to maximise the impact of the financial support and encourage further investment. Integration, that is, of aquaculture in society, in food security, in healthy diets, in preservation of the environment, and in regional development. By following the blueprints of the Multiannual Strategic Plans, and by engaging in effective outreach activities, marketing, and communication, aquaculture's integration can be accelerated.

This event, and other high profile events and initiatives on aquaculture's main themes, help to integrate aquaculture into the mind-set of society. Understanding and acceptance of aquaculture has broadened. The focus is turning more and more to the *benefits* of aquaculture.

This year we had coverage of the importance of aquaculture's role as a food source for the future at the EXPO in Milan, and we witnessed the participation of enthusiastic school children across the EU with the roll-out of the school project. Thanks also to you for your active participation in this project.

Commissioner Vella also spoke earlier this month at the environmental foot-printing Conference, a topic that FEAP

have also been actively involved in— which is really encouraging. It seizes the opportunity to openly illustrate to citizens and consumers the environmental footprint of farming fish.

We welcome this transparency and "push" of information from the industry very much, and I hope that we will see even greater efforts in the future. Balanced and transparent information has a strong role to play in the continued integration of aquaculture.

Questions are often asked about the environmental impacts of farming fish. Feeds for carnivorous fish have improved dramatically in recent years thanks to research on alternative ingredients, and technologies to avoid excessive feeding. These have had a strong uptake at farm level. In addition, we see that some Member States and regions make an additional effort to be transparent about this and other aspects of environmental performance, for example, by publishing information on escapes and mortalities online. Interestingly, the same regions and Member States that lead the way in production also lead the way in their efforts to be transparent.

The willingness and accountability of the producers involved in "pushing" this information into the public domain has benefits for the whole sector. Further efforts on your part,

when called upon, will illustrate that technologies and practices continue to improve – becoming more efficient, more sustainable and more indispensable as a well-managed food production system.

We should not forget that well managed, sustainable aquaculture does not necessarily "impact" the environment. On the contrary, some types of farming, such as shellfish, algae and multitrophic systems, can have a beneficial impact on water quality. In particular the integration of algae, a traditional food with a bright, untapped future could have an increasing role to play here. The responsible and good management practices upheld by European producers are evident from the successful integration and sustainable production in Natura 2000 and in Marine Protected Areas. Aquaculture depends on good water quality for survival. Producers in these protected areas have a strong incentive to look after the quality of the waters surrounding the farm. Not only that but the know-how and technologies developed through aquaculture are being used for restocking and conservation, actively improving the status of endangered wild species in these protected habitats. We have seen this for example with wild sturgeon in France and in the Danube region. Finally, when it comes to freshwater use and management, aquaculture can be a fantastic example of efficiency. The extensive ponds, rivers, settling pools, dykes,

and dams associated with aquaculture all provide important landscape management and hydrological services.

The benefits are clear. But simply practicing and communicating them at present levels is not enough.

Better enabling conditions for growth are needed; notably through cutting unnecessary restrictions and barriers. We are actively working to facilitate this. Later this week we will sit down with Member State experts for the first of the seminars which the Commission committed to in the Strategic Guidelines. We will discuss information from the Member States' Aquaculture Plans, and we will focus on the reduction of administrative burdens and the role of spatial planning.

By sharing information on "what works" and "what causes problems" between Member States, we take another step towards identifying unnecessarily restrictive legislation, and alternative, more effective solutions.

I am also delighted to see that the Aquaculture Advisory Council has also taken a big step closer towards its establishment. The wheels are now in motion for it to become operational from early next year. This will be a

much-needed direct interface between DG MARE and a representation of relevant stakeholders, including FEAP, through which valuable input on policy issues can flow, and I look forward to your active participation in this body.

To wrap up: Aquaculture is a healthy, secure food source, whose contribution will be vital to meet our growing demand for fish. Properly managed aquaculture helps maintain and preserve the environment while making an important contribution to the EU economy. Therefore I call on you to continue producing at the leading edge of sustainability, quality and efficiency. And together, our efforts to integrate aquaculture, in all aspects, will produce dividends for the EU in many domains.