

Es gilt das gesprochene Wort!
Sperrfrist: Redebeginn

Statement
der Europaabgeordneten

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Concluding Remarks - FEAP event "Integrating Aquaculture"

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Dear participants,

When Mr. Meyer informed me about today's event, I was immediately interested. It is a very rare occasion to have so many experts on very different aspects of aquaculture all here in Brussels.

With stagnant production and employment in the sector, it is crucial to talk about and tackle the issues that the sector is facing in Europe - from the promotion of aquaculture goods to the integration of the sector in the environment.

I am very honoured to hold the concluding remarks to this extremely insightful and interesting event.

The many topics touched upon by today's event clearly showed the challenges and opportunities for aquaculture in the future. As rapporteur of the basic regulation of the reformed common fisheries policy in 2013, I am quite aware of the pressures conventional fisheries has put on stocks and the marine environment.

Aquaculture can and will be a response to these pressures. Already now, products from aquaculture have overtaken the amount of fish caught from wild stocks. However, the fast growing and polluting

intensive aquaculture in other parts of the world has led to the misconception that fish products from aquaculture are generally more harmful to the environment and of lesser quality.

Moreover, for predator fish, alternative feed to fish meal and oil or unsustainable palm oil need to be found to truly make aquaculture a good and sustainable addition to conventional fisheries. Despite economic gains, we should refrain from sourcing with a negative fish-in-fish-out ration - otherwise nature loses.

Much has been achieved to improve this ratio, but more remains to be done.

Making optimal and complete use of farmed fish is another way in which aquaculture can help make a meaningful contribution to food production.

What does the EU - what do we as Members of the European Parliament do to increase consumers' trust in aquaculture products and to support sustainable aquaculture?

As part of the "Inseperable" campaign, the Commission informs consumers about the benefits of European aquaculture under the title **"farmed in the EU"**.

With visits and events for example with schools, less popular but sustainable fish - like the carp - are promoted. Also the advantages of traceability of fish farmed in the EU and of fish as part of a healthy diet are underlined.

How do we integrate European aquaculture in the **global and local economy**?

It is clear that higher regulatory, environmental and social standards in the EU make it difficult to compete with Asian countries, where 90% of aquaculture products originate.

However, independent labelling schemes, such as ASC, give European consumers a guideline for sustainable products and help create a level playing field for European producers.

I welcome the call under Horizon2020 for a research project on international cooperation on sustainable seafood with Asian countries.

It will not only help European producers to have less unfair competition, but also to improve the environmental performance of Asian producers.

As a further incentive for Asian producers, I encourage the European Commission to establish high environmental, consumer protection and sustainability standards for imports of aquaculture products to the EU.

On local level, the EMFF can help to continue the successes of Farnet. Direct marketing schemes, diversification of activities - especially tourism activities, and nature services should be some of the main goals.

In my home region, a mussel farm is successfully selling its produce directly to local consumers via the platform "Fisch vom Kutter". These and other schemes can help develop the aquaculture sector in the EU.

The fact that five countries account for 75% of EU production at the moment shows that we have a lot of development potential.

We have also heard about **aquaculture and nature conservation**.
How can we protect our nature and farm fish at the same time?

I think there is no contradiction, but we need to work to improve the current situation. The sector and competent authorities need to find a way to deal with risks to wild stocks. In some areas of Europe, sea lice and changes to the gene pool have become a real issue for wild fish.

We need to reduce the risk of farmed fish escaping from aquaculture sites.

Another topic that is on everybody's mind is the review of the nature directives. The public consultation has clearly revealed that the

implementation in some member states has made it difficult for the sector to develop its potential.

We need to work on a better implementation of the Birds and Habitats directives and look at how the aquaculture sector can help nature conservation rather than seeing fish farming and environmental goals on opposing terms.

What needs to be done in the future to **support the sector**?

Today, we have also heard very interesting presentations on how the sector can be integrated with other activities. Very interesting

research has been done in the field of hydroponics, which aims at integrating horticulture and aquaculture.

EU programmes have been and will be supporting such research efforts. Horizon2020, for example, currently supports projects looking into the technical improvement of aquaculture in the Mediterranean or the adaptation of the sector to climate change.

Public financing must be targeted at supporting truly sustainable aquaculture - in social, economic and especially environmental terms. For this, a common European understanding of "sustainable aquaculture" is necessary.

In this regard, I welcome the efforts undertaken to **set up the Aquaculture Advisory Council**.

I would like to support the call of the recent opinion on the future of aquaculture by this institution, which asks for an active role of the AAC in finding a definition for "sustainable aquaculture".

To meet the goal of "integrating" aquaculture, the AAC with its different civil society and industry actors is well equipped to help find solutions. The European institutions, national and regional authorities should listen to their advice!

As we saw again today, much needs to be done to allow European aquaculture to live up to its potential. However, with the many highly engaged actors I see at this event, I don't doubt that the future of the sector will be bright!

Thank you for your attention!