

## FEDERATION OF EUROPEAN AQUACULTURE PRODUCERS

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# Press Release

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## **FEAP welcomes Vision 2040 but warns that bold action, not only simplification, is needed to save EU aquaculture**

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The Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP) has provided its official response to the European Commission's Vision 2040 for Fisheries and Aquaculture, endorsing the initiative as a timely and essential opportunity to reverse decades of stagnation in EU finfish farming, while warning that the Vision will fail unless it confronts the root causes of the sector's decline.

FEAP sets out five core elements the Vision must include: a clear definition of a desired future state, a binding EU aquaculture production target for finfish by 2040, a genuine analysis of fundamental challenges, principles for cross-administrative coordination, and a high-level policy implementation pathway with performance indicators.

"European aquaculture is at a critical juncture. After 25 years of stagnation, Vision 2040 is the last real chance to build a competitive, sustainable, and strategically relevant sector," said Javier Ojeda, FEAP's Secretary General. "But this cannot be another empty exercise. If the Commission delivers a timid document that ignores the real obstacles, it will only deepen the paralysis. We need boldness, not rhetoric."

FEAP emphasises that the sector's persistent difficulties stem not from isolated administrative delays, but from an unsuitable and overburdensome EU legal framework, particularly in the environmental domain, that creates a severe spatial squeeze, blocks access to new farming sites, and makes effective governance nearly impossible at national and regional levels.

According to FEAP, the European Commission has so far misdiagnosed the problem, treating lengthy procedures and red tape as causes rather than symptoms. The organisation is calling for thorough, independent reality checks across Member States to examine both successful and failed aquaculture initiatives.

"The current legislative simplification efforts are welcome but will not be enough," Ojeda added. "Competencies for aquaculture lie at national and regional levels, yet those authorities are drowning in a proliferation of EU laws, often compounded by gold-plating and a disproportionate application of the precautionary principle. What we need at EU level is restraint: new regulation should be kept to what is absolutely necessary, especially given today's geostrategic realities."

FEAP also reiterates its long-standing call for a dedicated Common EU Aquaculture Policy, noting that the sector currently occupies an undefined position between fisheries and agriculture, with governance fragmented across marine and inland waters. In particular, FEAP expresses concern that freshwater aquaculture remains overlooked in flagship initiatives such as the Ocean Pact, and urges Vision 2040 to explicitly recognise its value and development potential.

To deliver on its ambitions, FEAP insists that Vision 2040 must be backed by a predictable, appropriately scaled, and sector-specific structural funding mechanism under the next Multiannual Financial Framework, building on the current European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) for the 2028–2034 programming period. A strong and dedicated budget will be essential to ensure that the sector can realistically meet the ambitions set for 2040.

The organisation further stresses that the path to European aquatic food self-sufficiency lies in the sustainable intensification of production, maximising output per unit of resource while maintaining one of the lowest carbon footprints among food systems. It calls on the Commission to formally acknowledge finfish farming as a matter of strategic autonomy, essential to reducing reliance on third-country imports. The EU currently relies on imports for around 70% of its aquatic food consumption, underlining the urgency of strengthening domestic production capacity and reducing strategic dependencies.

“Vision 2040 must set a clear finfish production target, ensure policy coherence across EU initiatives, including broader frameworks such as Food 2030 and the EU’s food systems transition and commit to a market-driven approach supported by stable funding,” Ojeda concluded. “But beyond simplification, what we ultimately need is a fundamental shift: a coherent, dedicated policy framework that truly enables European aquaculture to compete globally and thrive.”

FEAP stands ready to work with EU institutions and Member States to ensure the Vision delivers concrete results rather than another layer of unfulfilled strategy.

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#### ***About the Federation of European Aquaculture Producers***

*The Federation of European Aquaculture Producers is an organisation that represents the European fish farming profession and is based in Brussels. FEAP is composed of 25 national fish farming associations from 23 countries, both EU and non-EU. The combined yearly production of FEAP members surpasses 2,5 million tonnes of nutritious, safe, delicious, and environmentally sustainable fish.*