



Press Release

Brussels. April 8th, 2026. For immediate publication

The Ocean Board must deliver solutions, not more regulatory burden: EU aquaculture needs a real turning point

Brussels, 8-April 2026.- Speaking at the inaugural meeting of the European Ocean Board in Brussels on March 31st, the Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP) called for a fundamental shift in how the EU supports aquaculture. While welcoming the Board as a new high-level platform, FEAP stressed that European fish farming has made little quantitative progress since 2000, and that the Ocean Pact will only succeed if it tackles the root causes of stagnation.

Representing Europe's finfish farming sector, from rainbow trout and sea bass to carp and Atlantic salmon, across marine and freshwater, FEAP voiced a constructive but critical position. Javier Ojeda, representing FEAP at the Board, highlighted three pillars of the Ocean Pact as particularly relevant: governance, sustainable blue economy, and ocean health. However, he warned that without real change on the ground, the Pact risks adding yet another layer of unproductive dialogue.

In the event Ojeda delivered a stark message: *"Our fish farmers are tired of layers and layers of European regulations. They are exhausted by legislative inflation and cumulative regulatory pressure, mainly environmental, that the European Commission is imposing on us. Even national competent authorities cannot cope with it. The value of current legislative simplification efforts is very limited when, at the same time, new legislation relentlessly continues to be promoted."*

Ojeda argued that EU aquaculture needs a favourable business environment, not a regulatory nightmare, especially for micro and small undertakings. He pointed to Norway as proof that it *is* possible to combine environmental stewardship with a thriving aquaculture sector.

FEAP highlighted that concrete problems need concrete solutions. Ojeda gave three immediate examples where the EU has created problems without solutions: (1) Fish transport boxes falling off a regulatory cliff due to the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation; (2) Overpopulation of cormorants, requiring a European-wide management plan; and (3) Organic fish farming rules that are impossible to comply with.

"This Board will provide added value to aquaculture only if it serves to change this situation. This sector needs solutions, not more problems."

FEAP insisted on the need for binding advice, cross-cutting action, and reality checks. The Ocean Board cannot become a silo within DG MARE. If the Board can only influence maritime policy in isolation, its value will be "very limited, if any." Instead, FEAP called for binding or at least aspirational advice from the Board, cross-cutting solutions on real trade-offs, and an early warning mechanism for legislative incoherence.

Ojeda also proposed a concrete method to diagnose what is really holding aquaculture back: *"The EC, including DG MARE, seems not to accept the real underlying reasons holding back aquaculture, namely legislative overregulation. Instead, it focuses on symptoms like licensing procedures. We insist on carrying out at least one hundred reality checks across the EU, interviewing both successful and unsuccessful aquaculture initiatives, and gathering testimonies of the real challenges farmers face."*

FEAP urged members of the Ocean Board and the Commission to make the European Ocean Board **a real turning point** for aquaculture, not another talk shop: *"EU aquaculture needs an EU Aquaculture Common Policy, as clearly justified by the AAC. And the EU Mission 'Ocean and Waters' requires a socio-economic impact assessment before continuing its implementation."*

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Mr Javier Ojeda. Secretary General. In Ocean Board opening meeting.

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.