

On fish welfare: There can be no fish farming without fish welfare

Background

As the united voice of the European fish farming producers, FEAP represents 24 National Member Associations out of 23 countries. These encompass a wide range of farmed species including Atlantic salmon, rainbow trout, European sea bass, gilthead sea bream, carp, catfish, turbot, cod, sturgeon, sea trout, and more, farmed under a variety of systems. This federation brings together professionals whose livelihoods depend directly on the quality of their work and on social acceptance to achieve the long-term viability of their operations.

The core belief of FEAP is clear. As fish farmers, we are the guardians of our fish stocks and are responsible for them. The viability of this activity depends on the quality of our products, which is directly impacted by the production conditions and welfare of the fish: there can therefore be no fish farming without good fish welfare. FEAP strives to strengthen the necessary compliance and productivity of European fish farmers in providing the best production conditions and welfare for the fish.

However, we wish to address concerns raised by negative communication campaigns that undermine the significant efforts made by European fish farmers in this regard.

The general views of FEAP on fish welfare

As dedicated fish farmers, FEAP is deeply committed to the well-being of the species under our care. We recognise the vital importance of promoting fish welfare and continuously strive to ensure the highest standards in our industry. We invest in scientific research, technology, training, and innovation to learn more about the specific behaviour and needs of the various species and thus daily improve the conditions in which they are raised. This includes continuously monitoring the production environment, ensuring the best water quality, and making nutrition and disease management key, as well as minimising stress and ensuring respectful handling. European fish farming complies with applicable legal obligations and adheres to stringent regulations and standards designed to safeguard the welfare of the fish.

As fish farmers, we not only care for our fish but strive to best communicate our efforts to prove it in front of society, public administrations, and non-governmental organisations. While very isolated cases of poor welfare practices might be observed in a sector that comprises tens of thousands of fish farming undertakings and a complex value chain, these do not reflect, in any way, the general practice nor the overall commitment of European fish farmers to the well-being of their fish.