

Navigating the Future of EU Aquaculture

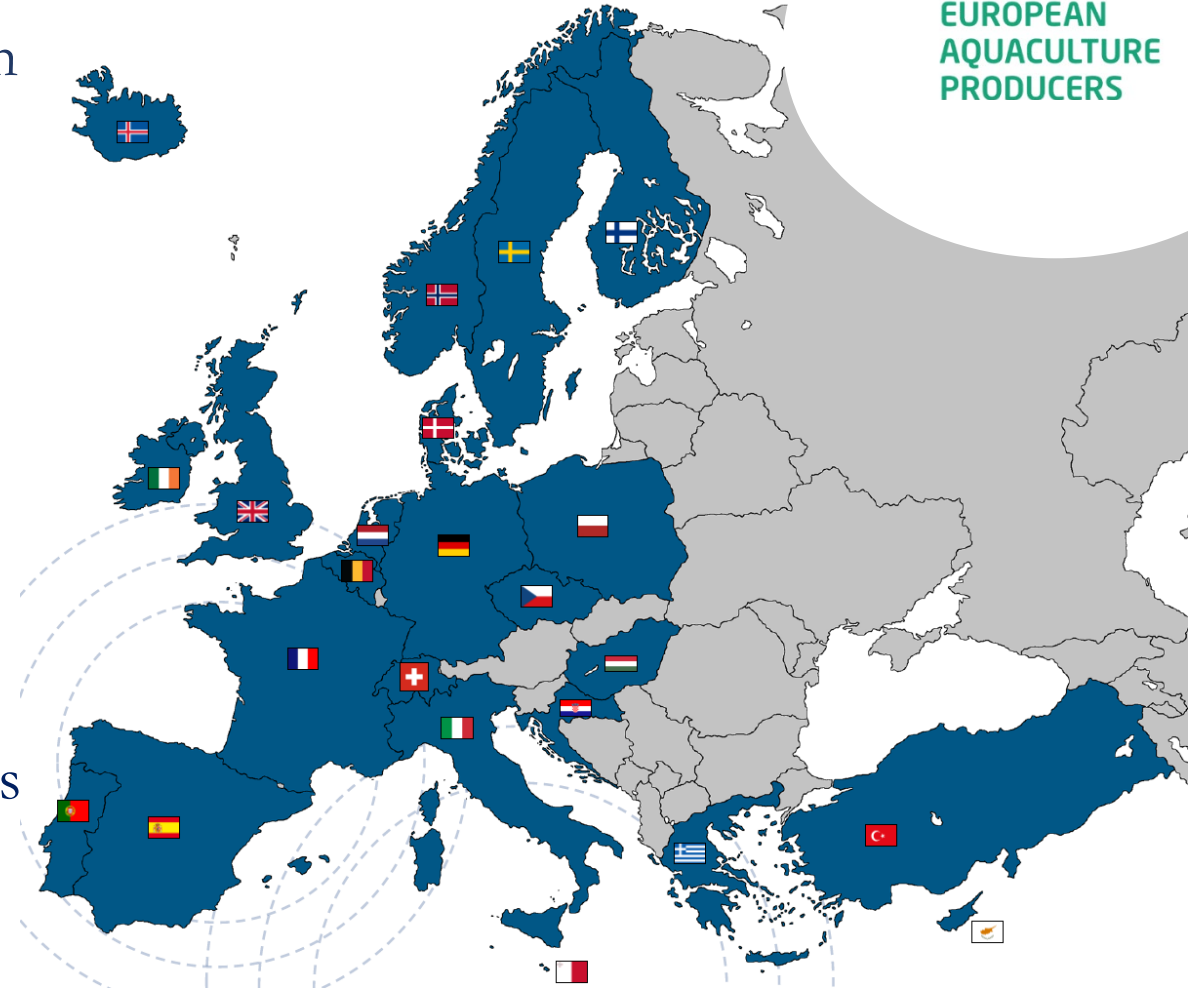
Key Insights and Strategies

Making Aquaculture a Vital Part of the European Sustainable Food System.
HU24EU-HUNATIP. Brussels. 14-Oct-2024



THE FEAP MEMBERSHIP

- The Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP) comprises national fish farming associations representing 24 national associations from 23 countries. European-wide, not only EU.
- Salmon, rainbow trout, seabass & seabream, turbot, sole, meagre, sturgeon/caviar, bluefin tuna, arctic char, carp... (and many more).
- The combined yearly production of FEAP members surpasses 2.5 million tons of nutritious, safe, delicious, and environmentally sustainable fish.



THE FUTURE OF AQUACULTURE

- Today, nobody disagrees that **aquaculture** has a major role to play in the future of humankind's food supply.
- Securing food supply also claims the role of **circularity flows** in food production and drastic reductions in **food waste**.
- But **what aquaculture** for the future?

THE FUTURE OF AQUACULTURE

When looking into the details of the **aquaculture policies** of high-level organisations, significant differences emerge:

The future of aquaculture according to the **European Commission**:

- a) Reflected in EC top policies like Mission Oceans and others.
- b) With a very strong environmental component.
- c) Main types of aquaculture promoted: low-trophic (algae, molluscs, sea urchins, holothurians, etc.), IMTA and extensive.
- d) Promotes production-oriented initiatives instead of market-oriented.
- e) Establishes weak links with the need for food production or with food strategic autonomy.
- f) Frequent use of the term *Sustainable aquaculture* but provides no definition for it.



THE FUTURE OF AQUACULTURE



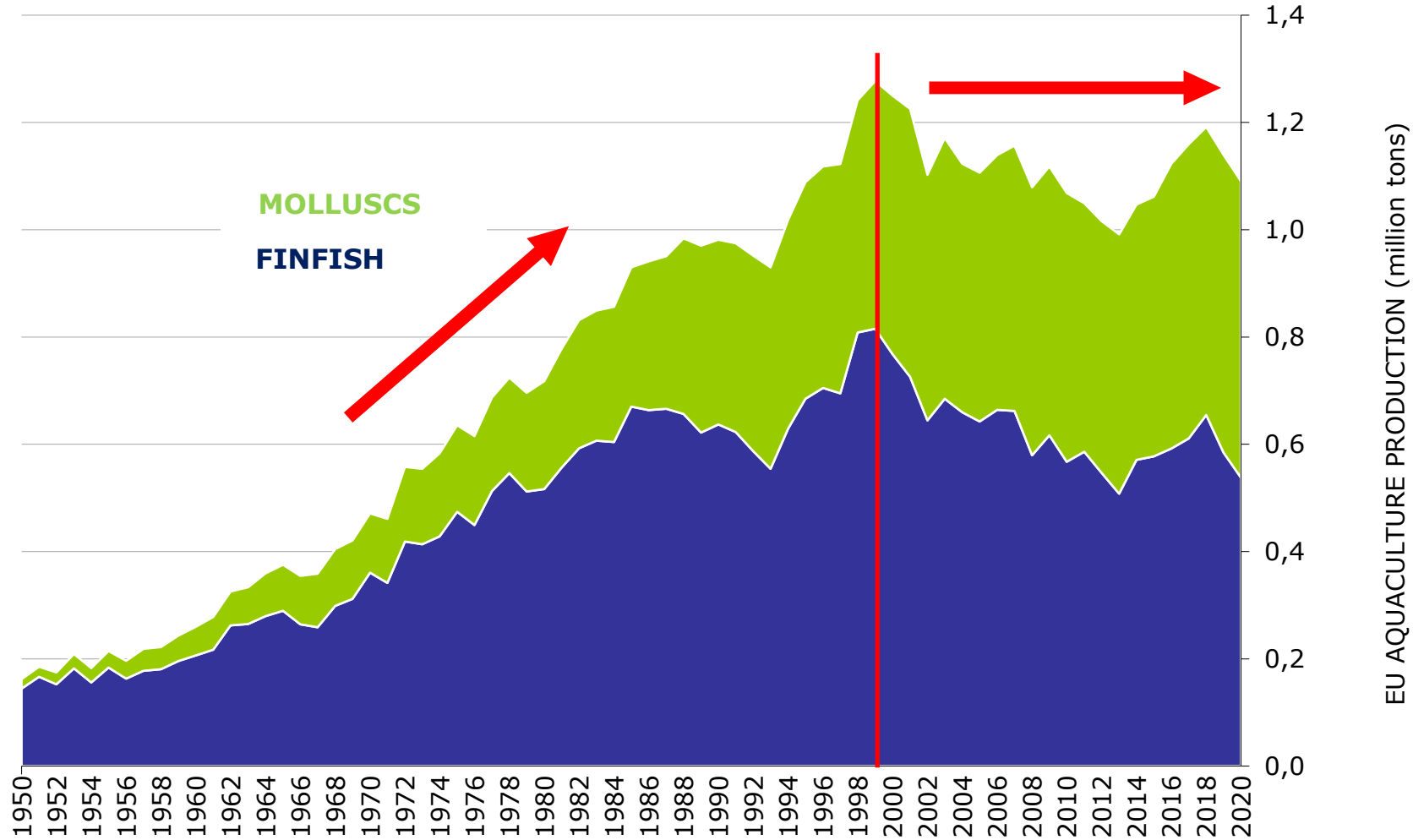
The future of aquaculture according to the United Nations (FAO):

- a) Reflected in its Blue Transformation.
- b) *Sustainability* with a full x3 perspective: social, environmental and economic.
- c) Types of aquaculture promoted: all (extensive, intensive and any species and system adapted to local conditions).
- d) Given the limited availability of global space and natural resources it mostly promotes the intensification of production.
- e) The aim is to increase global food production for food security, carried out in a responsible way.



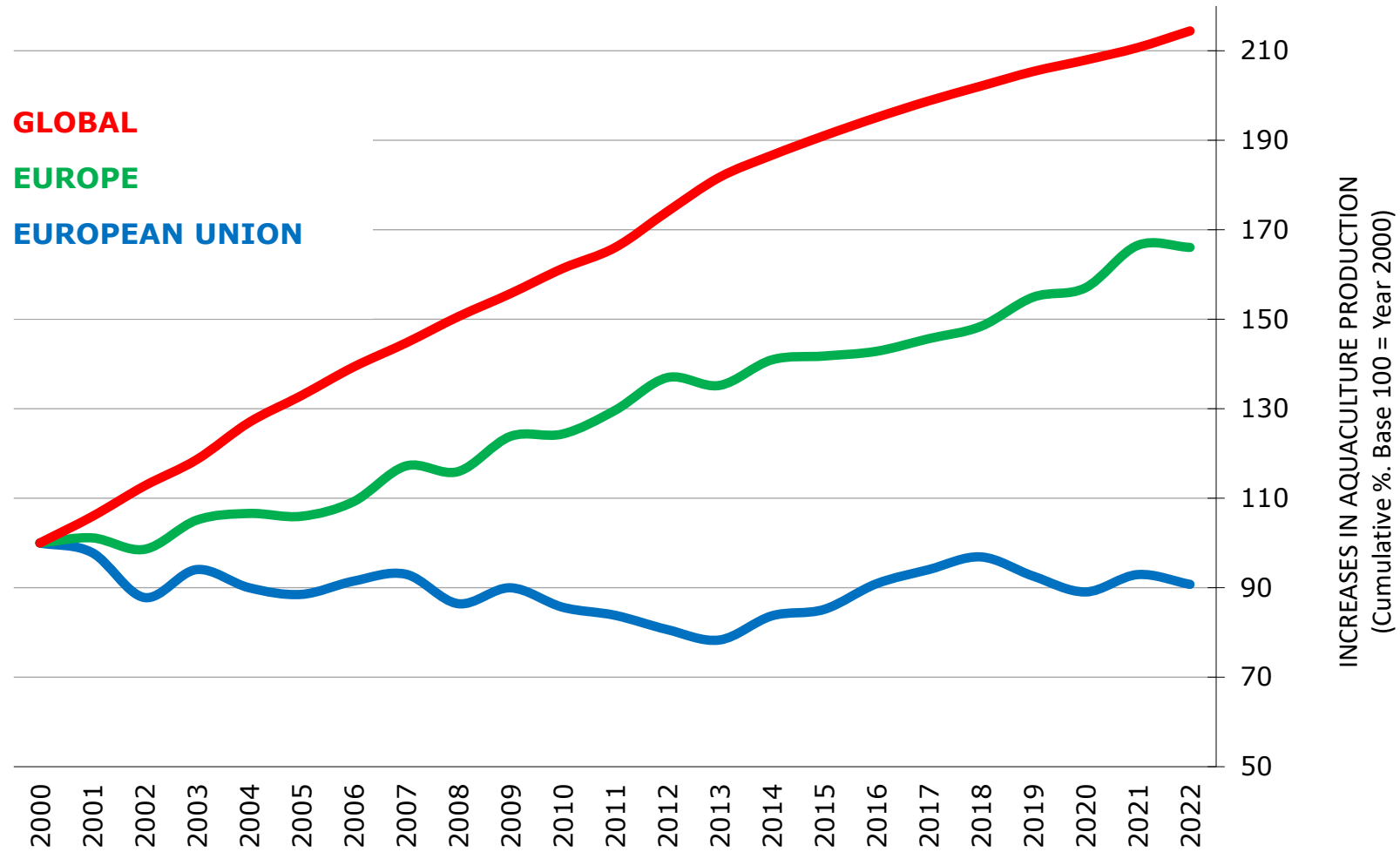
**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**

THE TRAGEDY OF EU AQUACULTURE



EU AQUACULTURE PRODUCTION (million tons)

THE TRAGEDY OF EU AQUACULTURE



FEAP'S VIEW ON AQUACULTURE POLICIES

- For substantial reasons FEAP shares the FAO perspective and not the EC one.
- However, this is not about the EU finfish farming establishment bashing EU authorities. This is an honest, constructive, science-based and experience-led point of view.
- FEAP considers the EC view short-sighted. However, we appreciate the value of the *Strategic Guidelines* and DG MARE's constructive efforts to mitigate its impact.
- FEAP agrees that mollusc and extensive aquaculture have a role to play in European aquaculture but doubts that mainstream European production and consumption will ever flow in that direction.

WHY IS THE EC AQUACULTURE POLICY SHORT-SIGHTED

- There is not enough space in the EU (or globally) to allow for substantial increases in food production through extensive farming (incl. aquaculture).
- FEAP is convinced that (regardless of the efforts of the EC) finfish consumption will not be replaced in European diets by algae, molluscs or holothurians.
- Finfish is an essential food that contains unique proteins, fats, and micronutrients that are naturally packed in a convenient *format*, and are extremely nutritional and healthy for human beings of all ages.
- The cultural imprints of gastronomy require several generations for change.

WHY IS THE EC AQUACULTURE POLICY SHORT-SIGHTED

- Food-Based Dietary Guidelines of 27 EU MS authorities continue recommending:
 - Eating fish 1 or 2 times a week (some even more).
 - One of them at least oily fish (trout, salmon, ...).
- Dietary changes should first be based on nutritional facts and secondly on environmental objectives.
- Finfish farming done in a responsible way has a low environmental impact when compared to other foodstuffs, including in carbon footprint.
- The EC considers current EU finfish practices as unsustainable, ignoring the merits of European aquaculture, especially, but not only, from an environmental point of view. **FEAP feels unfairly treated on this point.**

CONSEQUENCES OF THE EC AQUACULTURE POLICY

It is a fact that EU aquaculture is a shared competence with the Member States, and not exclusive of the EC, but this should not mislead on the **decisive impact of EC positions** on the situation and future of EU aquaculture.

The EC should **take responsibility** on the becoming of EU aquaculture:

- 1) EC policies and statements on how it views the aquaculture of the future **negatively affect the public image** of intensive finfish farming. This public image becomes perceived as unsustainable and delivers arguments to the discourse of NGOs that oppose finfish farming, US led vegan movements, radical animal welfare organisations, etc. This makes achieving social awareness and acceptance of finfish farming at the local level even more challenging.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE EC AQUACULTURE POLICY

- 2) Innovation is key for the future. EU research funding for aquaculture is currently focussed on seaweed farming, IMTA, sea urchins and other low trophic or extensive aquaculture farming. Little support exists to make intensive finfish farming more efficient. (It did exist in the past, though).
- 3) The dissemination of the research projects in the media also carries a strong public image influence component.
- 4) MS environmental authorities base their decisions on the views of the EC. The “low-trophic” concept has impacted MS strongly, even if from a scientific point of view it is not suitable for animals fed compound feed.
- 5) FEAP is convinced that the EC is not aware of the overwhelming leverage that its views have on MS and regional *Taliban* environmental authorities, making the availability of fish farming sites almost impossible.

CONCLUSIONS (1/2)

- Like it or not, finfish will continue being a key element of EU citizens' diets. Self-sufficiency of aquatic products in the EU market will sink deeper with imports covering the unsatisfied demand for fish.
- The coherent approach with Mission Oceans would be to ban the import to the EU of the finfish that are for the EC undesirable to be farmed within the EU.
- The potential of aquaculture in the EU will only be unlocked when food production in the EU becomes an objective with a similar level of importance as environmental protection, including the setting of quantitative production targets.

CONCLUSIONS (2/2)

- FEAP supports the fact that healthy oceans, seas, coastal and inland waters are vital for Europe, for its economy, for the environment and for the future of the world. Oceans and fresh waters hold solutions to food and human wellbeing.
- FEAP is convinced that finfish farming in the EU has great potential to provide food, economic development, and employment opportunities while respecting the natural environment just like this activity does in other parts of the world.

→ The long-standing stagnation situation of aquaculture in the EU (including finfish) can be solved if the right actions are taken.

→ Sustainable finfish farming means doing more with less.

→ Now is the time for change.

I hope you found this presentation interesting.

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WE ARE **THE SOLUTION** 
 WE ARE **THE FUTURE**

