



Press Release

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European aquaculture sector calls for regulatory precision in EU plastics directive

Brussels. The Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP) has issued a formal statement responding to the European Commission's call for evidence on the Directive on the reduction of the environmental impact of certain plastic products (SUPD). While fully supporting the Directive's environmental ambitions, FEAP warns that unclear terminology, inconsistent implementation, and a failure to distinguish aquaculture from capture fisheries risk undermining its effectiveness and placing disproportionate burdens on fish farmers.

In its submission, FEAP highlights that the current categorisation of aquaculture equipment, such as nets, pens, buoys, and ropes, as "fishing gear" fails to account for fundamental differences in use, lifespan, and waste management between stationary aquaculture systems and mobile capture fisheries. The organisation is calling for an explicit revision of the Directive's terminology to reflect the distinct reality of European fish farming.

"We cannot be treated as a subset of the fishing industry. Aquaculture equipment is stationary, long-lasting, and managed under completely different operational conditions," said Javier Ojeda, Secretary General of FEAP.

Moreover, if the EU is serious about both circularity and food security, it must start by recognising that fish farmers are end-users, not plastic producers, just as fishers are in the directive. Applying producer responsibilities to fish farmers would bury SMEs under an additional layer of red tape and run counter to the polluter pays principle.

FEAP also stresses that the Directive's scope must be applied logically, warning against its misapplication to freshwater aquaculture. The organisation urges the European Commission to clarify that the SUPD's provisions should apply exclusively to marine aquaculture facilities, which are directly situated within the aquatic environment the Directive seeks to protect. Extending them to freshwater operations, FEAP argues, would create legal uncertainty and inconsistent transposition across Member States, while also requiring application to numerous other sectors, different from aquaculture, located along rivers.

The federation further cautions against one-size-fits-all collection targets, noting that aquaculture equipment has significantly longer replacement cycles than fishing gear.