



Press Release

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

Brussels, 8-April 2024 - Speaking at the inaugural meeting of the European Ocean Board in Brussels on March 21st, 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 2001, and that the Ocean Pact will only succeed if it tackles the root causes of stagnation.

Representing Europe's fish-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 more 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 losses falling off a regulatory cliff due to the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation; (2) Overpopulation of common carp, requiring a European-wide management plan; and (3) Organic fish farming rules that are impossible to comply with.