



Press Release

Brussels. 14 September 2026. For immediate publication

FEAP calls for EU recognition of freshwater fishponds as multifunctional climate and biodiversity assets

The Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP) has published a Statement on the Ecosystem Values of Freshwater Fishponds in a Changing Climate. FEAP concludes that traditional pond aquaculture is a multifunctional system that combines local food production with water regulation, biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation and adaptation, and calls on European and national policymakers to recognise and support it accordingly.

Traditional extensive and semi-intensive freshwater pond systems, based predominantly on common carp polyculture, have shaped human-made wetland landscapes across Europe for centuries, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe. FEAP estimates that pond production technology maintains approximately 250,000 hectares of nature-like wetlands in the European Union, a significant part of Europe's managed wetland infrastructure. As droughts become more frequent and biodiversity continues to decline, these systems store and regulate water at landscape scale, buffer flood peaks, support groundwater recharge and moderate local temperature and humidity, while acting as natural bioreactors that retain and cycle nutrients and improve water quality.

"Freshwater fishponds are not simply production units, they are living wetlands that Europe cannot afford to lose," said Anna Pyć, President of FEAP. "As droughts intensify and biodiversity continues to decline, these traditional systems show that food production and nature conservation can go hand in hand. FEAP calls on EU and national policymakers to recognise and support the public services that well-managed pond farms deliver, and to give the sector the tools and resources it needs to keep providing them."



Many pond landscapes have developed over centuries into mosaics of open water, reed beds and wet meadows that support amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates and more than 400 bird species, with many ponds forming part of the Natura 2000 network as regional biodiversity hotspots. FEAP notes that these ecological values depend on continued active management: experience from abandoned pond farms shows that ending fish production does not, by itself, restore more natural or biodiverse habitats. Pond aquaculture also continues to produce food: FEAP member associations recorded 54,793 tonnes of carp species in 2023, including 51,784 tonnes of common carp, sustaining regional culinary traditions, rural employment and generational renewal across Central and Eastern Europe.

FEAP therefore calls on the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council and national authorities to:

- recognise the complex environmental and societal benefits of pond aquaculture in implementing the EU Biodiversity Strategy and EU climate objectives;
- recognise freshwater fishponds as traditional farming areas of high ecological value, and traditional pond aquaculture as a nature-based solution for water and nutrient retention, biodiversity maintenance and climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- integrate fishpond systems into drought resilience, wetland restoration, river-basin management and catchment-level water-management policies;
- ensure coordinated spatial planning for freshwater pond habitats and secure allocation of space for pond aquaculture that provides ecosystem services;
- simplify and make proportionate and predictable the administrative procedures for access to space, licensing and operation;
- provide targeted public compensation and investment support for the maintenance of ecosystem services, including the removal and beneficial agricultural use of accumulated pond sediment;
- improve scientific monitoring, evaluation and valuation of pond-related ecosystem services;
- strengthen cooperation between aquaculture producers, environmental authorities, scientists, water managers and rural communities; and

FEDERATION OF EUROPEAN AQUACULTURE PRODUCERS

Avenue des Arts 56
1000 BRUXELLES

+32 43382995 / +34 659094894
secretariat@feap.info



- launch educational and communication programmes to improve public and policy understanding of the ecological, economic and social values of freshwater pond aquaculture.

“Preserving economically viable pond farming is the only way to keep these benefits alive for the long term,” Pyć added. “With Europe facing more frequent droughts and growing pressure on water resources, maintaining and restoring the capacity of these systems is not just an aquaculture priority, it is a wider environmental and societal necessity.”

FEAP's full Statement on the Ecosystem Values of Freshwater Fishponds in a Changing Climate, including its complete policy recommendations and supporting references, is available here <https://feap.info/news/index.html>

Media Contact

FEAP Secretariat

Avenue des Arts 56, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

✉ javier@feap.info

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.