



Press Release

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FEAP welcomes a Vision 2040 which sets a positive growth direction for EU aquaculture, but EU fish farming needs targets

The Commission recognises aquaculture as a strategic pillar of the EU food system, explicitly supports inland farms, announces a legislative proposal for 2027 and opens the door to better consumer information, but sets no quantitative growth targets.

The Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP) welcomes the European Commission's Vision 2040 for fisheries and aquaculture, adopted yesterday. Presenting it, Commissioner Costas Kadis named limited aquaculture growth as a challenge that demands action and said, "We have also listened to the calls to take action on aquaculture." The Vision states that by 2040 EU aquaculture will be "a strategic and fully integrated pillar of the EU's sustainable food system", playing an increasing role in the supply of high-quality aquatic food by expanding production capacity and reducing the EU's trade deficit in aquatic products, at a time when EU aquaculture and fishing production covers only 38% of EU consumption. It recognises the sector's contribution to Europe's food and nutritional security, and names strengthening sustainable EU production and fair global competition as a central challenge until 2040.

The key announcement for fish farmers is a Commission proposal, by the end of 2027, for a clear, simplified, and coherent regulatory and administrative framework for aquaculture across the EU that provides certainty for investment and new entrants, with flexible, adaptive licensing. This responds to FEAP's long-standing call for a dedicated legislative instrument. The Commission acknowledges that aquaculture's growth depends on a predictable, effective framework for licensing and access to space. The proposal's value will depend on whether it binds Member States, shortens licensing in practice, and gives food production the same weight as environmental protection.

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FEAP also values that the Vision spells out what sustainable growth requires, starting with a simplified governance framework, and including economic profitability and fair income, a level playing field for EU producers, consumer trust, reduced dependency on imported inputs, climate adaptation and innovation. It recognises small-scale farms and larger enterprises as complementary, the latter driving efficiency, innovation and production capacity.

On space, the Vision names food production as one of the strategic priority uses of maritime space, “particularly as land-based food production faces increasing constraints”, and calls for fully integrating aquaculture into maritime spatial planning by 2040, while also considering economies of scale. FEAP particularly welcomes that inland aquaculture is explicitly included: freshwater farms are to be supported through integrated spatial and water resource planning, coherent with River Basin Management Plans and, where relevant, Flood Risk Management Plans and Natura 2000 objectives. FEAP warned that the European Ocean Pact overlooked freshwater aquaculture; carp ponds and other inland farms now have a place in the EU’s long-term vision.

Of special value for fish farmers is the Commission’s commitment to consider extending mandatory consumer information to prepared and preserved fishery and aquaculture products. Today, products such as canned or marinated fish, ready meals, and caviar do not have to tell consumers where and how the fish was produced, so EU-farmed fish cannot be distinguished from imports. FEAP has long called for closing this gap. The Vision rightly links traceability and labelling, trade policy and the promotion of EU production, and recognises that transparent information supports product differentiation and rewards more sustainable options.

The Vision further announces an EU Initiative on Sustainable Aquaculture in 2027 to coordinate the sustainable growth of EU production. It encourages Member States to build synergies between aquaculture, fisheries and agriculture, strengthen producer organisations and value chain integration, include aquaculture-specific measures in national climate adaptation plans, as farms face growing losses from harmful algal blooms, jellyfish and parasites, and reward nature-positive aquaculture, including through nature credit schemes. It also calls for more specialised training in aquatic animal health and welfare and innovative farming practices.

“The Commission now recognises what fish farmers have said for years: demand and environmental performance are not the problem, the rules are,” said Anna Pyć, President of FEAP. “But a strategy is a starting point, not a result. Our members will judge the Vision by how long it takes to license a new farm, and today that is still five to eight years.”

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What the Vision does not contain is just as important. It promises to expand EU aquaculture but sets no quantitative targets for growth: no EU production target for 2040, no national contributions and no milestones. Its growth examples focus on low-trophic species such as molluscs and seaweed, while finfish farming, essential to replace imports such as rainbow trout or seabass, receives little specific attention; FEAP insists that for fed species, what matters is feed origin, not the fish's trophic level. This federation would also have liked to see a reference in the Vision that aquaculture in general, and finfish in particular, is already a low-impact, low-climate-footprint food production method. Finally, further EU rules on farmed fish welfare must be science-based, species-specific, and compatible with farm viability. The budget proposal reserves EUR 2 billion for core fisheries policy, which remains insufficient and still lacks a dedicated allocation for aquaculture.

"The next step is to put numbers and dates on the Vision," said Javier Ojeda, Secretary General of FEAP. "A binding EU target for finfish production in 2040, with milestones, would turn this ambition into a plan that Member States and investors can work with, and the 2027 proposal is the place to set it. Funding helps, but only regulatory change can unlock growth and competitiveness. The Vision invites Member States and regions to translate it into local realities, and that is where it will succeed or fail, farm by farm and file by file."

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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.