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PROFET POLICY

'FISH POLICY FLOW'

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Thematic Priority: Scientific Support to Policies

**Final Conclusions and Recommendations
Deliverable 27**

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PU	Public	PU
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	
RE	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)	
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	

I. Summary

Feedback from the individual workshops has been brought together here under the broad topics of sustainability, policy and communication – since these considerations evolved as the major issues of importance, both for fisheries and aquaculture, during the timeline of the project, and particularly from an overview of the themes of the presentations and the debate in the PROFET POLICY workshops.

While many individual session conclusions concerned detailed discussion on the details of individual projects, most of the final debates covered issues that concerned:

- The sector (aquaculture or fisheries) covered by the workshop
- The local or regional concerns of the sector (e.g. Baltic vs. the Mediterranean)
- Topics that were current and of high concern to the sector (e.g. financial/fuel crisis, applications of legislation, Marine Protected Areas...)

Overall, one can summarise that these orientations highlighted:

1. The interpretation and understanding of sustainability as a guiding principle for both aquaculture and fisheries
2. Obtaining an improved understanding of European legislation, hence the policies that drive legislation
3. Improving communication and finding the appropriate means to develop this, in real time, to policy-makers, stakeholders and the public

Consequently, while PROFET POLICY focused initially on dissemination issues for European-funded RTD, it has also succeeded in providing a platform for communication and debate on strategic issues of importance to fisheries and aquaculture.

At the time that the first workshops were organised, in the beginning of 2007, discussion had started on the creation of a European Technology Platform for aquaculture interests. During the project, this possibility was also presented and debated within the aquaculture workshops. In the final workshop in Vigo (Spain), presentations were made on

1. regional Technology Platforms in Spain on fisheries and aquaculture and
2. the preparatory work for the constitution of the European Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Platform (EATIP)

Following this final event, moves have been initiated to create a European Technology Platform for fisheries.

In effect, the EATIP and such a fisheries platform would provide concrete realisations of the initial goals of PROFET POLICY by perpetuating the original goals and objectives of PROFET POLICY – providing a multi-stakeholder platform whose goals include the preparation of Strategic Research Agendas for the development of the sector(s). One can conclude that PROFET POLICY has made a significant contribution to the understanding of the need for such Platforms and their realisation.

A concurrent theme that was raised was the need for European RTD [projects] to have an integral communication component and that this should last throughout the project (rather than final dissemination), involving stakeholders where possible.

Facilitation of the interaction between scientists, potential users, stakeholders and the public should be encouraged when important RTD projects are being undertaken.

II. Sustainability, policy and communication

The sustainability issues identified relate to the need for a common definition and approach, in both fisheries and aquaculture, using better tools to measure or input to standards or benchmarks.

- While several projects have focused on this aspect at the European or National levels, one also sees that Certification bodies/organisations (e.g. Marine Stewardship Council, Globalgap or the Global Aquaculture Alliance) and NGOs (e.g. WWF, Greenpeace) have their own interpretations.

The policy issues debated focused on the need for a better understanding (by stakeholders) and hence implementation of policy. In many cases of common legislation for fisheries and aquaculture, a core point identified is that aquaculture should be at least an ‘equal stakeholder’ (with other users of resources) and in some cases, is the ‘best placed’ stakeholder to provide advice on the implications of policy applications at the operational level.

Although part of the concept of ‘Knowledge Management’, the communication issues raised in the project were not always RTD needs, but demonstrated a frequently-commented requirement for each sector as a whole, fisheries and aquaculture, to “tell its story” better. Another facet of communication is the feedback that showed how better communication and networking contribute to the overall management of overlapping issues that remains an area needing attention.

It was a clear recommendation that policy makers and research programmers need a pan-European view to better understand the gaps that remain to be solved – and hence the research required – and how national programmes can interact and reach out across borders.

- ERAnets appear to be a part of this solution and have received encouragement

The following sections provide bullet-point summaries on policy opinions and RTD needs that were identified within the debates of the workshops. *A full summary by workshop is attached as an Annexe.*

In certain cases, different opinions were put forward by stakeholders; where consensus was not reached the source of the opinions is indicated.

A. Sustainability measurement

There seems to be a change in the approach of different stakeholders, where the protection of a common resource, the marine, is perhaps being replaced by the **sustainable exploitation of the largest global ecosystem**.

Certification and labelling are core points of debate for both fisheries and aquaculture. The scope of direction has moved towards a need for proving sustainability since there is increasing pressure from the consumer and general society on this topic, A coherent approach to this was strongly recommended.

However, when referring to sustainable development, it is evident that development cannot occur without investment – which is best achieved from economically profitable operations.

1. Key points raised in debate

a) Aquaculture

- Key factor remains **communication by explaining sustainability** (a better choice for all concerned)
- Measuring and proving sustainability forms a very important issue for the sector
 - Is there a role for improving the indicators developed within the CONSENSUS project¹
- FEAP/IUCN Guidelines on Mediterranean² (Sustainability indicators) were developed in 2008 and mentioned in several workshops (noting that these address farmers/decision-makers):
 - Can this model be applied also to continental freshwater aquaculture? (*raised in Warsaw and Vigo*)
 - *Note: following this recommendation, the FEAP/IUCN agreement was expanded to include freshwater in Oct 2008.*
 - Mediterranean sustainability guidelines seen as an important document by many stakeholders
 - *A similar approach would need funding so as to develop the models made for marine Mediterranean aquaculture.*
 - Need to bring these into reality & practice (development of a new Code of Practice? Can this be made certifiable?)
- Could CONSENSUS and other related actions be converted into a certifiable action/scheme?

b) Fisheries

- Data on stock status and its interpretation is a focal point for strong debate (even disagreement) between the professional and RTD sectors. Improved consultation and communication is needed to diminish this aspect. Real time data collection/communication must be improved.
- The ability to have a methodology for referencing 'sustainability' is still required, even though there are certification schemes for specific stocks.
- Fishery managers need more integrated, multi-disciplinary advice.

¹ See www.euraquaculture.info

² See http://www.feap.info/feap/code/guideiucn_en.asp

- Measures targeting Technical Conservation can be seen as restrictive and the professionals does not consider that these provide all of the answers on sustainability, even though it is recognized that they can improve selectivity, reduce discards, protect sensitive habitats and juveniles/spawning species.
- A call for using the profession to be involved more closely with RTD activities was evident, although improving sectoral organisation and its links and knowledge of the RTD sector may be necessary.
- Taking RTD on fisheries beyond nation borders/interests was seen as important, assuring the communication of RTD results and data to the profession and the scientific community.
 - Consolidation of results – within an easy access website – was also a clear recommendation

III. Understanding and Implementing Policy

- For fisheries, simplification of legislation is a top priority for the profession, particularly in respect of Regulation 850/98, since this does not blend in well with the regionalized approach being adopted by the RACs.
- Some fisheries sectors represented feel that the socio-economic aspects of fisheries and its contribution are underestimated, given the accented focus on sustainability issues.
- The aquaculture sector is very concerned about **policies that reduce its economic competitiveness**, noting that it is still young, has made a lot of improvements but needs its benchmark positions. The goalposts are being moved regularly on a wide range of topics, including environmental as well as other operating issues – such as farmed fish welfare. All of these actions end by increasing costs of production while market competition, particularly with 3rd country imports, becomes more and more severe.
- **Aquaculture should be an equal rights user** (this point was raised regularly)

A. Water Framework Directive

- There was much reference to **integrated management options and systems**, where all of these efforts have to recognise the **validity of all stakeholders in the coastal zone**.
- The Water Framework Directive is rather scary for the aquaculture profession as fish farmers seen as ‘industrial polluters’ – many freshwater farmers throughout Europe are still not sure how WFD will affect their fish farm.
 - Need for a full impact study on the application on the profession? As an example, it is considered that water charges based on volume ‘use’ would kill the business.
 - Water use might be better based on transit vs. evaporation?
 - **Close consultation required on WFD developments needed (e.g. classification of water bodies)**
 - **Role of large ponds (inland Europe) in water catchment – Natura 2000 (needs promotion)**
 - **Benefits if water quality improves in passage through ponds**
 - **Pond Farmers should be seen as partners in WFD implementation**
- Spatial planning is a big issue both in marine and freshwater aquaculture: comparatively, there are no regional policies for freshwater aquaculture

- Fish Health; risk-based surveillance and compartmentalisation are major concerns with the Aquatic Animal Health Directive; monitoring of health status of surrounding water should be pursued. There is much overlap with principles of WFD. Does this need further examination? Freshwater fish farms feel that such overlap could lead to confusion and restrictive actions.
- Availability of land & water – 2 requisites for continuation or development of freshwater fish farming; environmental interactions dominate current thinking; pond farms need large space for small production levels. While there is scope for development (increased productivity), predation (e.g. cormorants/herons) and additional concerns (mainly related to environmental and Habitats/Natura 2000 Directives) restrict optimism hence private investment.
 - There is a need to quantify costs for farms to meet environmental references – perhaps it is needed to establish [economic] tolerance levels between farmer and society (research needed on this – absence of solid data)
- Irritation on implementation of WFD – farmers feel that this has the potential to reduce further the concept of level playing field in Europe (subsidiarity principle acting to apply different levels of application).

B. Maritime Policy & spatial planning

- Long standing issues of importance must be supported by policy makers – **licensing, spatial planning, support & guidance to RTD** (spatial planning was a regular topic in the workshops)
 - Site selection and carrying capacity needs [consistent and reliable] support data
 - Clearer position on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and aquaculture potential needed
 - European Marine policy could play an important role here
- **Effective and efficient area management must be promoted, where aquaculture needs to benefit from the application of spatial planning.**
- Coastal aquaculture is the subject of many conflicting interests
 - Can the Maritime Policy provide solutions?
- A key issue for European aquaculture is the manner in which **licenses for operation** can be obtained; in many European countries, there is a need for multiple licences – of different duration and scope – in order to function. The application of **spatial planning – allocating specific areas for aquaculture development** - as well as other related options, could facilitate these procedures.
 - The concept of a one-stop shop for licenses merits reflection – so as to facilitate development and the entry of new players – within the Member States. ‘An enabling environment’

C. Natura 2000

- Natura2000/Birds Directive – applications of these Directives give major problems for inland farmers.
- Clearer direction on scope of intent and application is perhaps needed from the European Commission.
 - *I.e. does the concept and application of Natura 2000 exclude economic activities?*

IV. Common similarities

Clear differences exist between the Aquaculture and the Fisheries industrial sectors in Europe in terms of its expectations and relationships with the RTD community.

- The Fisheries industry is well organized, but communication between Researchers and Fishermen is difficult
 - o Fisheries appears to be suspicious and mistrustful of the scientific community – particularly since many of the measures/projects engaged relate to control on the sector
- The Aquaculture industry is a younger sector and depended on successful RTD for resolution of many technical issues and problems
 - o As a technical ‘process’, the aquaculture sector (be it freshwater or marine) has closer relationships with and higher expectations of the Scientific Community.
- From an economic point of view
 - o Fishermen see research as a potential limitation to their activities
 - o Fish Farmers see that successful RTD is an opportunity to develop their business
- On a time frame position on RTD
 - o Fishermen have urgent issues to discuss
 - o Fish farmers are dealing with medium to long term issues.
- From the economic performance point of view
 - o Fisheries activities are driven by different factors – fuel prices, fisheries stocks (TACs and Quotas) – as well as market prices
 - o Fish farming has more flexibility in reacting to market demands and has other mechanisms
 - Quality and product differentiation are extremely important to this however
- Immediate concerns noted that
 - o Captured fisheries are more vulnerable to climate impacts.
 - o Technical, domestication (biology) and disease issues are more important for fish farming.

Thus, it can be confirmed that research demands are real and evident in both communities but that they differ significantly, involving different scientists and disciplines.

However, at the end of the day, fishermen and fish farmers are placing similar products on the same market. In addition, processing activities are similar. The key difference is that fishermen have defined periods for fishing and are limited by TACs and Quotas, while fish farmers have to grow their own livestock and are actively involved with their fish all year round.

The big issues for both sectors are the market interest in the products, the best planning of sales (including best prices), and the public image of both sectors as food suppliers and resource users.

The main remaining question is: How to improve the communication?

V. Sectoral communication issues

In general, there is little public knowledge of what Research is actually doing in respect of either sector – fisheries and aquaculture; the PROFET POLICY project has given the Research sector an excellent opportunity to explain what it is doing, but many stakeholders don't feel involved in the Research.

Most people are also not aware on policy issues; People have less and less time and money to go to conferences; There is a need to translate Research results; There is a need to assess Research results; End users have to be involved in a project from the beginning.

- Events such as Profet Policy provide a unique opportunity to learn the different points of view of the stakeholders, **promoting better communication between science and the producer sector**. Within this, it is clear that the **Technology Platforms** that were presented at the workshop (local, regional and European) are definitely important players in the RTD arena.
- **Communication must be improved at several different levels – on what science is doing to improve, on what the professional sector is doing on implementing recommendations, on how science and the profession are working together, on what the Commission is doing in respect of policy development.**
- Multi-stakeholder cooperation and agreement is seen as essential for the future, where consensus agreement will be required while understanding the need to move quickly, efficiently and effectively.
- **Constructive cooperation between producers and relevant stakeholders must be established**
- Associations provide essential hub with Government/Agencies/Organisations
 - Promote BMP and Codes of Practice/Quality Schemes
 - Need better communication tools and support – transparency of operation essential
- **Potential need for an aquaculture observatory (to follow developments) – following the creation of the fisheries control agency in Vigo.**
- **Effective risk communication on farmed fish seen as essential**
- **Potential response on role of farmed fish in combating lifestyle diseases**
- **Position on genetics/genomics and the potential use of GM feeds needs examination for clarity**

There is a need to communicate and disseminate Research with efficient tools, which could also be TV, Media, Local press, Industry Newsletters, Training Courses, Google, New communication tools.