

FOREWORD by Commissioner Borg

Seafood is an important and healthy source of proteins all over the world. Increasing consumption of fish in the context of over-fished wild stocks creates an opportunity for the aquaculture sector to help bridge the growing gap between demand and supply of fishery products. The European Commission wants to help provide conditions favourable for the sustainable growth of aquaculture, ensuring both adequate supplies of seafood to our citizens and adequate protection of the environment.

Aquaculture in the EU benefits from many favourable factors such as a strong market for seafood, a long tradition of freshwater and marine fish and shellfish cultivation, dynamic and advanced public research, world class technology, qualified and trained entrepreneurs and fish farmers, suitable climatic conditions and sites for a majority of the species currently farmed. Aquaculture is important both economically and socially in the EU.

However, our aquaculture sector also faces a number of challenges which have an impact on production. These include limitation on space, low water quality in places, high Community standards on public health and the environment, which make it difficult to compete with third country producers especially in Asia and South America.

We need a strategy that delivers the best possible growth potential for the aquaculture industry, taking into account both our assets and constraints.

Our industry has shown openness for innovation and capability to compete and grow. Salmon, seabream and seabass farming are good examples of this. Some of the constraints faced by our industry however also need to be addressed by public authorities. The aquaculture sector needs in particular public funding for research to help find solutions to sustainability and competitiveness challenges. Entrepreneurs also need a transparent and predictable business and legal environment to invest and develop.

This applies particularly to the conditions set by public authorities to access sites, obtain permits and farm their products. My task in this regard, as EU Commissioner in charge of aquaculture, is to identify what the European Commission can and should do at its level to move in this direction.

Considerable efforts have been made at Community level since the adoption of the Strategy for the sustainable development of European aquaculture in 2002¹. It is too early to assess the impact of some of the actions set in this strategy. In the meantime new initiatives have been adopted by the Community which concern aquaculture: the European Fisheries Fund adopted in June 2006 will give Member States the possibility to support in particular innovative and environmentally friendly aquaculture projects over the programming period 2007-2013. Calls and projects under the 7th Research Framework programme are being developed which will offer new opportunities to tackle scientific and technological challenges faced by aquaculture.

¹ [COM\(2002\)511 final](#)

The purpose of the present public consultation is to launch a debate with all stakeholders on the further development of sustainable aquaculture in the European Community which should result in the revision of our 2002 Strategy. I invite you to provide us with your views on the consultation paper, whatever your stake or interest in the aquaculture sector.

I thank you for your participation in this consultation.

Commissioner
Joe BORG