

*The Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP) is a forum that brings the industry together to debate issues of mutual interest. The forum allows industry to develop a unified position on important issues and to communicate effectively with relevant authorities.*

*Could a similar federation be beneficial in Asia? We asked Mr Courtney Hough, President of FEAP to speak about the potential role and benefits of such an organization. This is what he had to say.*

## **Organising and Operating a Regional Federation of Aquaculture Producers**

*Courtney Hough*

A regional Federation is very different from a local or National Association in both its goals, its scope of activities and, hence, its organisation and direction. Inevitably, the first question posed is “Why create a Federation” where the answer can only be provided once one knows the framework of action, the goals and the chances of attaining these because of the existence and work of a Federation.

The Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP) is currently composed of 30 National Aquaculture Associations from 22 European countries, having developed from only four members of four countries in 1968.

The core goal of the FEAP is to provide a forum for the debate of issues common to its members and to communicate the results of such discussion to the appropriate authorities. Providing this possibility for fair and equitable debate to sectoral representatives gave the basis for the initial development of the Federation, reinforcing the potential for efficient communication between the Member Associations and developing clear opinions and arguments on matters of importance to the profession. One of the key objectives is the effective communication of these opinions to the authorities, which vary, dependent on the topic, and cover all aspects of aquaculture operation.

For example, one of the most important authorities for the FEAP is the Commission of the European Community, particularly the Directorate General (DG) for Fisheries, which has a specific brief concerning European aquaculture. However, other DGs, which have responsibility for Sanitary and Consumer issues (DG SANCO), the Environment (DG ENVIRONMENT) and Trade (DG Trade) also have direct relations with the aquaculture sector.

A National Association will have privileged links to its own National authorities and bodies, such as Universities and Environmental agencies. A regional Federation rarely has these privileges partly because of the absence of corresponding regional structures but also because its initial reason for being is usually less directly practical in nature and more one of communication and liaison with its members. Defining goals and scope of action for a regional Federation is quite difficult, since it is only by its achievements that it will inevitably be measured by its members and interlocutors. Growth and the development of influence takes time and effort.

It is important for a regional Federation to recognise the interlocutors that are appropriate to its function and to take the steps necessary for the establishment of its own contribution and authority. For example, outside of the links established with the European Commission, the FEAP also maintains liaison status with the FAO of the United Nations, particularly for the purposes of the European Inland Fisheries Advisory Committee and the Aquaculture section of the General Fisheries Council of the Mediterranean. The establishment of the Aquaculture sub-Committee of the Committee on Fisheries is of evident interest. These links enable the Federation to be informed on many of the wider issues affecting the sector and often allow access to specialist professional input.

There has been a significant increase in the requirement for consultation with the professional aquaculture sector in recent years, reflecting changes in government policies and the requirements of governance, for which a recent White Paper was published by the European Commission, where the higher involvement of stakeholders and the move towards self-

regulation are important issues. This attitude is also reflected in the development of international and interprofessional networks, which may be thematic or specific in nature and where input from the professional sector is required.

More recently, it has been realised that market expansion and globalisation imposes better understanding of the markets and increased marketing efforts, particularly for the attainment of improved market stability and where the public image of a sector is increasingly important within an overall development scheme. When issues such as international trade and market stability, sustainability, development of standards (including organic farming and ecolabelling issues), governance and self-regulation have to be debated, with the professional point of view in mind, this cannot be done in a vacuum.

These are topics that pass frontiers and need consultation within the profession on an international basis. For the voice of the producer to be heard, it is essential to be able to provide a defensible sectoral opinion that has authority and cannot be accused of simply defending national interests. A Federation must be able to provide apolitical positions, based on science and/or good sense, that support the sector and its development.

### **Structure**

A Federation can only be made up of members who have a similar or identical legal status and who share common goals and activities. In the case of the FEAP, only National Aquaculture Associations can be considered for membership. This statutory position excludes individual companies and local Associations.

## Meetings of the Federation

For its basic purpose, the FEAP organises 2 statutory meetings for its members each year, one of which is the Annual General Meeting. These meetings are held on a rotary basis in the countries of the Member Associations, the host assisting the organisation of each meeting.

Within each meeting, different Commission meetings (open to all Members) that treat specific sectors or subjects that are represented by members (e.g. Salmon, Trout, Environmental issues, Fish Health, Marketing). This allows improved international understanding of species, topic or country-specific issues. It is perhaps worth remembering that it is not the role of a Federation to interfere in any issues of a National nature since these are the responsibility of the National Association and this hierarchy must be respected.

Where continuous attention is required or a specific problem is identified, Working Groups may be created. As an example, the FEAP currently has Working Groups for Large Trout, Mediterranean Aquaculture and Fish Health. A previous Working Group was charged with the development of the FEAP's Code of Conduct for European Aquaculture (approved and published by the FEAP in June 2000).

## Additional actions

### Research, Training, Development

Within Europe, the existence of several important RTD programmes, grouped within the European Framework Programme for Research, has allowed the FEAP to develop an active role within a range of projects. The common point to these is that the goals and results are applicable to the whole of the European fish farming sector, as represented by the FEAP.

Such projects include:

- *Aquaflow* – the dissemination of the results of EU sponsored research projects on aquaculture (EU RTD project);
- *Maraqqua* – a review of environmental legislation and issues affecting European aquaculture (EU RTD project); and
- *Assisting the development of training programmes and skill development* (AquaTnet and Pisces) (EU Leonardo da Vinci programme).

While the FEAP has been the manager of some projects, generally it is incorporated as a partner in order to assure communication to the production sector, as an information dissemination activity. Providing this facility, access to and communication with the profession is an increasingly important role for a Federation.

### Federation-led actions

The FEAP led the development of a project for managing price and production data within the European aquaculture sector – an action that was partly financed under the Common Fisheries Policy – in order to collate the data from the different countries under common conditions (condition and value). Data from this facility is used for the development of the FEAP reports on this subject. The FEAP website ([www.feap.org](http://www.feap.org) (which is currently being redeveloped)) provides a window on FEAP activities for professionals and the public alike. This is an essential part of the public presence required of a Federation.

Perhaps the most important element developed recently is an action entitled 'Aquamedia', a project which is being developed for the purpose of informing the general public of what aquaculture really is, does and contributes. This project has been started using finance solely from within the industry and is a truly international action. Its activities will be wider-ranging and cover 'products' that will be provided on the Internet as well as paper and CD-ROM support.

### Benefits of a Federation

The benefits of establishing a Federation are not immediately clear at the start since its actions tend to be more general and medium to long term in effect. For the FEAP, the immediate benefits to the Member Associations include the ability to meet and discuss issues of common interest on an international basis.

The key benefit of a Federation is to be able to give to its members the facility for informed debate and a platform for unified opinion. The cornerstone of any Association or Federation is the statutes; these have to demonstrate equity in structure and decision, enabling the authority of opinion.

The advantage of providing a common voice for a Regional sector is self-evident, particularly in Europe where the European

Commission plays such an important role in determining legislation and actions that directly affect aquaculture within the European Union.

The creation by DG Fish of the Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA), a body that allows direct consultation with the Commission, has placed increased importance on the views of the FEAP, which in turn has imposed increased responsibility on the Establishing and maintaining links with international organisations involved with aquaculture provides the information and awareness of important topics that affect (or will affect in the future) the profession. Providing information on these to members should also be seen as a priority for a Federation, preparing for debate where necessary.

The involvement in research and training programmes is made for a similar reason, while improving the speed and efficiency of the transfer of results to the profession must be seen as a key goal.

As the sector has developed in Europe, it has been increasingly recognised as an important player and contributor to the fisheries sector. It is the sector's responsibility to 'stand and be counted' and it is the FEAP's responsibility to facilitate this position. This means knowing what has happened, is happening and is going to happen.

A Federation also allows the achievement of projects or work of a scope that a National Association cannot undertake. Projects such as 'Aquamedia' or international information dissemination are typical of this position and it is the role of a Federation to identify such actions and whether they are appropriate to follow.

There is no doubt that by widening the activity of the FEAP to include practical, wide-ranging actions as a supplement to its forum activities has increased its strength and influence.

### Lessons learnt

Establishing, operating and managing a Federation requires commitment, finance and results. Since seed finance has to come from within the sector, a Federation of Associations has to be financed from the individual Association budgets.

This means that the Federation budget is unlikely to be important – at the beginning. While this may limit the fixed structure of the Federation, it should not inhibit the basic goals targeted.

The provision of a common voice is one of the important benefits of a Federation but this can only be obtained within an equitable forum. Providing the opportunity for the smallest Association to voice its opinion alongside the largest has to be respected.

It should also be noted that within the FEAP, whose members speak 17 different languages, the meetings are held in one language (English). Although this can create some difficulties and misunderstandings, it has proven to be a cost-effective and efficient way of working.

The development of projects that involve the Federation can provide additional finance but a Federation's existence cannot be based solely on projects. It is essential to have a good balance between core activities and projects in order to respect the basic reasons for creating the Federation. Development has to be placed after achievement of the initial goals.

It is important to recognise the actions and the links that can provide a service to the Members and which they could not obtain themselves individually. As an example of this, the FEAP has established strong links with the European Aquaculture Society and AquaTT (Aquaculture Technology and Training) which are reflected in a number of different ways – participation in joint network projects, distribution and dissemination of information, participation and development of workshops and conferences.

The success of a regional Federation can also be measured in terms of participation, encouraging the involvement of Member Associations and their representatives, without aspiring to be competitive to their function. Maintaining a complementary balance between objectives and actions and providing the services anticipated are integral to successful operation.

After 33 years of existence, the forefathers of the FEAP have recognised the benefits of their foresight. The Federation provides their platform for developing and resolving international issues that affect their activity, it gives them a common and important voice of opinion and allows the sector to move forward in ways they did not envisage at the time. While no crystal ball is perfectly accurate, one has to foresee that the global aquaculture sector must change and adapt to new circumstances, on many different fronts, and that effective and successful regional Federations are needed by the profession in order to assist the long term sustainability of the aquaculture profession.

## A Note on Enhancing Access to, and Meeting, Market Requirements for Aquaculture Products\*

The aquaculture sector in Asia-Pacific has been making significant contributions towards alleviating poverty by promoting food security and providing livelihood opportunities particularly in rural areas. In many countries, the sector has been a provider of foreign exchange earnings. There is every reason to believe that the sector could increase the above-mentioned contributions to even higher levels. Given appropriate enabling conditions, producers and exporters could gain access to markets for aquaculture products and/or enhance their competitiveness in both local and export markets.

### Issues and recommendations

Most of the relevant issues relating to market access and market requirements were raised during the deliberations on Thematic Session 3 (Aquaculture products: quality, safety, marketing and trade) at the *Conference on Aquaculture in the Third Millennium*. Following its deliberations, the *Conference* recommended the following:

- For long term viability and sustainability, commercial aquaculture development must be market driven, taking into account consumers' requirements.
- Trade in aquaculture products should be further liberalized, including the elimination of barriers and distortions to trade, such as duties, quotas and nontariff barriers in accordance with the principles, rights and obligations of the WTO Agreements and other international agreements.
- The creation of efficient marketing systems, in which prices are determined by supply and demand in order to ensure economic efficiency and sustainability, should be facilitated.
- Standards applicable to international trade in aquaculture products should be harmonized in accordance with relevant internationally recognized provisions. On a national level, safety management systems including Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) and Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP), should be in place to ensure that aquaculture products are suitable for human consumption.
- Collection, analysis and dissemination of relevant information should be facilitated to enable producers and industry operators to make informed decisions and ensure consumer confidence in the food safety of aquaculture products.
- Fish trade measures to protect human or animal life or health, the interest of consumers and the environment, should not be discriminatory and should be in accordance with internationally agreed-upon rules.
- Industry at each stage in the market chain must take primary responsibility in the production and distribution of safe aquaculture products and by-products, with due consideration of the polluter-pays principle.
- Production systems must allow traceability of product ingredients, including information on packaging, processing, harvesting, growing conditions and water quality, aquaculture stock, feed and health programmes.
- Labeling of aquaculture products should follow recommendations and codes of practice in line with the WTO and *Codex Alimentarius* requirements.
- Labels of aquatic feeds should include complete information on additives, growth promoters and all other ingredients, including the possible use of genetically modified organisms.
- Safety assessment based on risk analysis and the precautionary approach should be carried out prior to market approval, including products from modern biotechnology.
- International and interregional cooperation in the field of safety, quality and trade in aquaculture products should be encouraged.
- Alternative market approaches, such as fair trade and organic farming, should be encouraged on a national and international level.

Related recommendations emanate from a recent survey on Asian and Pacific fishery trade undertaken by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).<sup>\*</sup> These include the following general recommendations:

- Appropriate measures to overcome difficulties and to develop the fishery trade should include sustainable development and utilization of available resources, diversification

of products and markets, value addition, and joint ventures in processing and marketing.

- Simplification of trade policies and procedures.
- Standardization of product quality.

The survey also included the following specific recommendations:

- Aquaculture has proved to be a lucrative sector provided environmental management is sound and there are no serious disease, feed and fry constraints.
- Despite improvements in infrastructure and upgrading in processing and packaging policies, especially for frozen and chilled products, the majority of Asian and Pacific producers are still exporting raw materials and semi-processed products. Processing facilities in these countries need improvement and their personnel need to be trained in stringent quality control measures in order to capture a better share of export markets.
- In most Asian countries, fish inspection programmes are basically used as a means to assure the quality of exports, with little emphasis on products marketed locally. Tightening of import inspection system in developed markets, as well as a growing awareness and demand for quality in the home markets of the Asian and Pacific region, will provide the impetus to more industries in the region to upgrade their processing facilities to serve both local and overseas markets. The pace of investment in the modernization of processing facilities in many countries would also need to be increased in order to upgrade these facilities.
- As the Asian and Pacific region is a growing, dynamic market, the potential for producers/exporters of fishery products exists and this requires in-depth study.
- To encourage better flow of products within and outside the region, it is necessary to review existing tariff levels, export-licensing policies, export duties and other non-tariff barriers that still exist in a few countries.

### Proposed action

It is clear from the above that, in order to realize the growth potential of their aquaculture sector, Asia-Pacific countries will have to ensure that their products gain

access to and be competitive in the domestic and export markets for aquaculture products. To achieve these, their products should meet international standards of quality and safety as well as conform with country specific import regulations designed to protect the environment or particular interest groups such as the national industry or the consumers. The key role of the farmers and aquaculture entrepreneurs in maintaining high levels of product quality and ensuring good practices, appropriate labeling, among others, is evident. Certainly, enabling support should be provided by the government which should include continued collaboration with the rest of the world in developing and setting aquaculture product quality and safety standards and in ensuring implementation of international agreements in this regard. Governments will also have to take an active part in international cooperation on issues relating to either ease of access to markets or trade distortions caused by tariff and non-tariff barriers, subsidies and the like. Finally, the need for research, training and advisory services has been included among the recommendations, indicating that specialized agencies and other intergovernmental organizations would have key supportive roles to play.

In this regard, the NACA secretariat is well-placed to initiate action to draw up a project proposal on the topic of this paper and implement the project as soon as funding is secured. The project envisaged should include a combination of research, analysis and consultations at national and regional levels leading to the development and/or strengthening of national capabilities in gaining access to and in meeting the requirements of markets for aquaculture products and in dealing with trade-related issues covered by international trade agreements and negotiations particularly those falling under the WTO umbrella as well as environmental agreements. These activities should be implemented by the NACA Secretariat in collaboration with the national focal agencies and Collaboration Centres and other concerned stakeholders including the fish farmers and fishery products producers/exporters. Appropriate inputs should be solicited from FAO, UNEP, WHO, WTO and other concerned national and international organizations including ADB, ASEAN, ICLARM, Infofish, SEAFDEC, UNDP, and others.

*This article was prepared by Dr. B.R. Rola, adjunct professor at the UPLB Institute of Strategic Planning and Policy Studies, College of Public Affairs, Philippines, retired ESCAP social development officer, and Friend of NACA, following the Regional AquaBusiness Seminar held by NACA in collaboration with the Malaysian Department of Fisheries in Langkawi last January 2002. Dr. Rola may be reached at jessrola@hotmail.com.*

*Footnote: UNESCAP (1996). Promoting exports of fish and fishery products in selected island developing countries of the ESCAP region (ST/ESCAP/1677). UN, Bangkok. pp. 19-57.*

### Fishtech abalone feed trials

In the mid 1990s Anne E. Fleming and Patrick Hone published a paper "The Development of Artificial diets for Abalone", an exhaustive account of the work in this field at the time which was largely research-based. The paper reported, "Before further development of artificial diets can occur, both economically and nutritionally, it is important to establish an understanding of the composition of existing artificial diets and the motive for the source and level of inclusion of the respective ingredients". At that time the lowest cost of the "artificial" abalone food was well over US\$4/kilo (most were higher) and FCRs were generally poor.

After nearly 40 years of developmental work and experimentation, manufactured abalone food has, just in the last few years, arrived as a viable and profitable alternative to feeding wet and dried kelp. There are more than 8 large, upwards of 20 smaller, and countless "on farm" abalone food producers worldwide. Many of these are in China and are not easily or readily available for shipment. South Africa, Australia, Taiwan, New Zealand and Iceland make up the majority of viable producers today. The C&F price has come down from US\$4/kilo to nearly US\$2/kilo, while at the same time the formulations, protein sources, energy sources and quality of the pellets are allowing FCRs down to 1.3:1. At these levels of cost and performance, in most worldwide locations, manufactured abalone feed can and does hold its own alongside wet or dried kelp, after consideration of higher labor, lack of automation, waste, and disease often associated with wet kelp.

There is no one diet best for all abalone species or all water temperatures, however formulations are now available from a combination of manufacturers to range from tropical to cold water abalone and from 3mm seeds to 150mm grow-out. In California FISHTECH has been testing available abalone foods since 1994.

They recently completed what they believe to be the most exhaustive commercial comparison tests of available abalone feeds (in this case the on-growing of red abalone), testing those made in South Africa, Australia, Iceland, Chile, China and Taiwan. These comparisons continued from May of 2000 through July 2001. The results of these growth trials are summarized in the chart (all food producer names removed as our tests are as yet unpublished). However, Fishtech claims that the top line represents a proprietary FISHTECH formulation. Contact abalone@ix.netcom.com.