

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

**The Aquaculture Industry Urges the European Commission
to Take Action For its Survival and Sustainability**

Brussels, September 12, 2008: The international growth of aquaculture activities inevitably has a direct effect on the sustainability of the European sector that produces principally fish and shellfish. The profession's main issues and concerns were discussed at the *International Aquaculture Conference* organized this week in Brussels by the *European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD)* and the *International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)* in partnership with the *European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)* and promoted by the *Spanish Ministry of Environment, Rural and Marine Affairs*.

Indeed, with a global increase of seafood demand added to the over-fishing of certain species, the aquaculture sector should present an attractive future for its stakeholders. However, during the conference the industry emphasised the sector's critical state and its concerns for the future.

Increasing market competition with imported products, combined with increasing costs linked to legislative and market demands, is complemented by a weak image of the profession and its products; consumer communication needs to be much improved given the sector's weak reputation in Europe. Although recognised as being unjustified, more attention to this aspect, particularly on environmental issues, needs to be made.

The European industry has highlighted its need to see the European Commission adapt its regulatory framework so as to compete with other producers of the world on a level playing field.

One of the alternatives discussed cover the implementation of best practices among the sector, and of international certification schemes as a viable contribution for ensuring the industry's sustainability.

The industry welcomed the French Presidency initiative in prioritizing aquaculture during its presidency through a specific "Memorandum" and, with strong support from the MEPs present, urged the European Commission to rapidly set a clear European strategy for the entire aquaculture sector, marine and freshwater, with the integration of clear economical, social and environmental aspects so as to assure its long term sustainability

The international conference participants included representatives from consumers' associations, the retail sector, the aquaculture profession, EU policy makers (European Commission, Parliament, Presidency, representatives of the Member States), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, environmental and conservation organisations, associations and trade unions.

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