

“AQUAFLOW”

Bridging the gap between science and industry

The European aquaculture sector is principally made up of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) employing less than 50 people. More than half of those SMEs employ less than 10 people and are family businesses. Because of a lack of time and personnel, their capacity to perform research is generally quite low. However, their need to remain competitive on the market while complying with regulations, may require them to invest in new technologies. This implies that they would have to be kept up-to-date with progress in aquaculture research. In reality though, the communication and the exchange of expertise between scientists and producers are often restricted to a minimum.

Moreover, the dispersion of the European aquaculture industry over thousands of kilometres - from small bays of the Aegean Sea to Norwegian fjords and from Irish lochs to Hungarian lakes - does not favour exchanges, it restricts the transfer of expertise and the global development of the industry. The only way to inform all the potential aquaculture end-users and to **enhance horizontal** (between producers of different geographical areas) and **vertical** (between producers and scientists) **contacts** would be to develop an **international network**.

That is exactly what **AquaFlow** has done in 19 countries, where 16 languages are spoken. From 1998 to 2003 onwards, the network provided information on the results and progress of EU-funded and Nationally-funded programmes of aquaculture research and technological development (RTD) to producers across Europe. It was coordinated by the European Aquaculture Society (EAS) and managed by EAS and the Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP). EAS was responsible for summarizing project findings in a one-page standard form: the **technical leaflets (TLs)**. The rest of the network was made up by

institutions recognised for their quality involvement in aquaculture, acting as National Network Leaders (NNLs), who were, along with the representatives of the national producer associations, responsible for the translation of these TLs and their dissemination.



AQUAFLOW GROUP PHOTO. SOURCE: ALISTAIR LANE/EAS

A total of **435 TLs** was disseminated over the 6 years of the AquaFlow contract, of which 331 were produced during the Fifth Framework Programme. All TLs and their translations, as well as a database of contacts of project coordinators and partners, were made publicly accessible through the development of the AquaFlow **website**, www.aquaflow.org. To ensure that as many SMEs as possible had access to the information supplied by AquaFlow, TLs were also printed on **paper** (in individual format or



Project acronym:

AQUAFLOW

Full title of Project:

Aqua-Flow: European network for the dissemination of aquaculture RTD information

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Web-site:

www.aquaflow.org

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At the end of the project, a survey was conducted in the 19 countries of the network to assess the SMEs' perception of the dissemination of RTD information. The survey, representing the views of approximately 740 SMEs, showed that an overwhelming majority (93.7%) of European aquaculture SMEs were interested in receiving RTD information (such as provided by AquaFlow). Most received information through the press (specialised journals: 54.9%, trade press: 26.6%) or publications of their producer associations (41.8%), and more than one-third (33.9%) of the total respondents cited AquaFlow as their main source of RTD information.

researchers and producers. The network has also contributed to increase the awareness of the industry of the possibilities of using electronic media and improving the services given by the Producers Associations. The increased interaction and information has aimed to enhance the application of the research results in the field and, hence, the competitiveness of the sector, resulting in a **growth of technical competence**.

“AQUAFLOW WAS ABLE TO GUARANTEE A WIDER AND FASTER CIRCULATION OF INFORMATION ON RESEARCH RESULTS AND PROGRESS IN THE FIELD OF AQUACULTURE“

AquaFlow, as a functional operating system and network, was able to guarantee a wider and faster circulation of information on research results and progress in the field of aquaculture to potential end-users, and to Aquaculture SMEs in particular, across Europe. This led to **increased interaction** between the SMEs and the research community, as well as between SMEs. In addition to the direct contacts made by National Teams, and through the on-line databases and research contacts and EC links, the information generated by the network helped to **identify further RTD requirements** from both the