

Press Release

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€7 million project to support sustainable growth in aquaculture

With concerns around sustainability of food production and food security continuing to rise, a team of European aquaculture experts will begin a four-year research project, worth almost €7 million to establish new strategies and models for sustainable growth in the European aquaculture industry.

The Tools for Assessment and Planning of Aquaculture Sustainability (TAPAS) HORIZON 2020 research project, led by the University of Stirling, will create cost-efficient management tools and practices for the European aquaculture sector to investigate the limits and the potentials of the fish farming activity, the social interactions, the potential environmental impacts and other future effects.

Professor Trevor Telfer of the Institute of Aquaculture of Stirling University is leading the multi-partner study which starts this month and will seek to establish a comprehensive “toolbox” to support transparent and efficient licensing, enhance environment sustainability and aquatic food security while taking into consideration the potentials of food production, economic growth and the creation of new jobs.

The consortium will evaluate structures currently in operation across the EU’s seas, lakes and rivers, examine various environments and develop new approaches that will deliver computer-based support systems for sustainable aquaculture expansion. The work is in line with the EU’s Marine Strategy Framework Directive to protect marine environments

more effectively and will provide consistent real-time monitoring, observation, early forecasting and management technologies.

The research team of TAPAS project will collaborate with industry, regulators, certifiers and other stakeholders to ensure the toolbox they create is accessible, using training and outreach activities to improve the image of European aquaculture and promote an integrated sustainability strategy.

Professor Telfer said: *“As Europe continues to produce millions of tonnes of food each year, we want to ensure this industry is feeding the world in a sustainable way, while taking care of the environment. By developing new, flexible and unified approaches to aquaculture planning we aim to strengthen sustainable growth in the vital marine and freshwater sectors and improve the image of the aquaculture sector.”*

Shane A. Hunter, Technical Director of AquaBioTech Group said: *“The international multidisciplinary consortium of the fifteen (15) industrial and academic partners of TAPAS project carries a wealth of knowledge and experience providing an excellent knowledge base to create new tools for producers and regulators for management and monitoring of aquaculture activities”.*

The collaborative work will play a major role in the European Commissions’ strategy to achieve smart growth in aquaculture production across the region’s seas. Key drivers for the economy, these waters presently represent approximately 5.4 million jobs and generate a gross added value of almost €500 billion a year.

The project also will support the implementation of the adopted **Aquaculture Strategy for the Maltese Islands 2014-2025** which clearly envisage: *“Improving aquaculture farm operations will lead to increased efficiency and profitability of those farms that adhere to the principles of best practice and comply with the conditions of their operating consents, thus ensuring no nuisance is caused to other coastal users. It would also engender a positive public image for the operators. Further development in the industry needs to work within the limits of the environmental carrying capacity of the coastal zone and marine areas. This will ensure that the industry is operating effectively yet within the scope of national objectives for achieving and maintaining Good Environmental Status and Good Ecological Status of coastal and marine waters.”*

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Note:

The Tools for Assessment and Planning of Aquaculture Sustainability (TAPAS) project is a Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Action funded by the European Commission (Grant agreement No: 678396).

The co-ordinator of the TAPAS project is University of Stirling, Institute of Aquaculture. www.aqua.stir.ac.uk .

AquaBioTech Group is a partner in TAPAS project consortium

The AquaBioTech Group is an international research and development, engineering and consulting company strategically located in the centre of the Mediterranean on the island of Malta, operating globally with clients and projects in over fifty-five countries. The vast majority of the company's work is related to the marine or aquatic environment, encompassing aquaculture developments, market research / intelligence, through to project feasibility assessments, finance acquisition, project management, technology sourcing and technical support and training.

A number of photographs can be provided upon request.