

New EU-funded aquaculture infrastructure project launched

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Coordinating access to top class research infrastructures is the aim of a new platform about to be carried out by a pan-European team of aquaculture research facilities. The project, titled AQUAEXCEL ('Aquaculture Infrastructures for Excellence in European Fish Research'), has received EUR 9.2 million of EU funding under the 'Research Infrastructures' area of the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) Capacities programme.



The project will be led by Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (INRA), France, and will see 16 partner institutions from Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Spain and the UK come together with the common aim of offering unique research services to users from different countries, attracting young people to science, and helping to shape the scientific community.

Aquaculture in the European Union encompasses a wide range of fish and mollusc species. It is a true pan-European production activity that has grown rapidly from a cottage industry in the 1960s into an industrial sector of multi-national companies, SMEs and family firms. Marc Vandeputte, researcher at INRA and coordinator of the AQUAEXCEL project said: 'As consumers become more concerned about where their food comes from, today the European aquaculture sector is facing complex challenges which can only be solved through providing research teams with access to a wide range of the state-of-the-art infrastructures and the right biological resources.'

The launch of this project comes in the wake of strong demand from public and private research units, which have to work towards sustainable production of high quality seafood with reduced environmental impact. Across the consortium, 23 aquaculture research facilities will be represented.

A multidisciplinary team of experts specialising in fish nutrition, physiology, health and welfare, genetics, monitoring and management technologies, and engineering will carry out the project. Their aim is to work towards developing an integrated approach to link and coordinate key research infrastructures in Europe in order to create the basis for harmonizing access, joint research, and networking.

By fostering links between academia and the industry itself, the researchers hope to improve market-driven research priorities, evidence-based products and services, and efficient knowledge transfer.

The project will also map out the aquaculture research infrastructure capacity across Europe. This online tool will help to create a new research environment in which all researchers, regardless of their location in the world, have shared access to unique scientific facilities, including data, instruments, computing, and communications.

For more information, please visit:

Animal Genetics and Integrative Biology Unit (GABI), a joint research unit between INRA and AgroParisTech
www4.jouy.inra.fr/gabi_eng/Research/Our-Multidisciplinary-Projects/Aquaexcel-EU-project

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