



Sustainable fish multiplication: The Aquaculture National Plan points to a 37.8% growth by 2025.

AquaFarm, in Pordenone Fiere on 26th and 27th January, shines a spotlight on the role of fish farming to make a sustainable contribution to the population growth in the world, to life-quality, in Italy too, and to the reduction of the foreign trade deficit on fish products. Protagonists: funding and support policies, at national and regional level, and the producers.

Milano / Pordenone 4 January 2017. Eating fish is good for you. Scientists, doctors, nutritionists, chefs, food bloggers say so, and the message seems to have left an impression. Consumption, which touched the lowest peak of recent years in 2012 because of the crisis, is indeed recovering, and in Italy we have reached the levels prior to the crisis itself. To get an idea of the amount, here are a few figures: UE28 fish consumption is 23 kg per capita, but there are incredible differences between Hungary, which comes just over 5 kilos, and Portugal, that exceeds 56 kilos, thus reaching the top. Italy is just above average with a fish consumption of 26 kg per capita. However, we should eat more of it: regarding the weekly consumption of fish derived proteins, we are in fact stuck at the two-thirds of the 60-gram dose recommended by FAO.

However, increasing the consumption of fish is not so simple. The fish products eaten in Italy are already largely imported -just below 80% of the total, a stable data since 2010. Compared to Europe we are the worst, but the European Union also has to resort to import for more than 50% of its consumption. On the other hand, worldwide, fishery production has been stagnant for 10 years, at just over 95 million tons/year. For various fish species the biological catch limit, allowing for capacity replacement, has already been reached or even exceeded. Therefore, with this trend, the fish production of the future is likely to go from stagnation to decline.

The demand however is continuing to grow. Especially in Asia the increase in per capita income is already causing an increase in demand for fish, which are more expensive as a source of valuable protein. Today, about 6.7% of the consumed protein is of aquatic origin. To this data we have to add the fact that the population is continuing to increase and will reach 9.7 billion in 2050 (8.5 in 2030). The FAO estimates that the overall protein production will have to grow by 40%, just to keep up with population growth. It is very likely, however, that the final figure will be 100% for the highest growth in demand for animal protein, especially fish ones.



The answer, then, is aquaculture, whose production continues to increase. According to FAO, last year it grew by 5% and has now overtaken fishing as a source of fish products. In 2016 the pro capita consumption of fish products amounted to 10.9 kg of farmed fish and 9.7 kg from fisheries.

The trend will continue for the foreseeable future: the latest OECD / FAO projection in fact supposes in 2025 a total fish production to 195 million tons, 103 million of which would come from aquaculture, in 2025.

But we can't expect aquaculture to grow by itself, especially in Europe and in Italy. The EU as a whole (including the UK) is only the eighth largest producer of aquaculture products, with 1.3% share. Farming brings in 24% of the consumed fish, but over 57% of farmed fish is imported. Already in 2012 the EU foresaw that farm production should have grown 40% by 2030 for freshwater species and more than double for the Mediterranean ones. Our Aquaculture National Plan has fixed ambitious goals all the same, with 2025 as a target: a 38.7% increase overall, with 44.7% for fresh water one (therefore beyond the EU objective), a 58.1% increase for sea fish and 31.2% for shellfish.

Achieving these goals requires commitment by aquaculture enterprises, their suppliers, research, public sector, but also by demand. Several AquaFarm sessions are devoted to these issues, starting with the opening one, on 26th January, in which MIPAAF (Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies) Undersecretary, with specific responsibility Giuseppe Castiglione and Paolo Panontin, Councilor with fishery-resource responsibility of the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia will speak and illustrate the national and regional policies to support this sector. Funding and positive actions, as well as the perspective of the producers' associations, will also be spoken about at the closing session of 27th January, with a key role for research and the promotion of the production quality. This is because increasing the amount is only one part of the goal. So as not to undermine the economic and social role of aquaculture, the multiplication of fish must be done in a sustainable way, and we must not forget the loaves. But you'll read about this in a following release.

The program for the 2017 AquaFarm conference is available and constantly updated on the website www.aquafarm.show, in the Program section, where you also can already register for free participation.

For more information

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