

New Flemish Aquaculture Platform will develop a long-term vision for aquaculture in Flanders

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In Flanders (Belgium) aquaculture production is very limited. However, far beyond its borders Flanders is recognized for its scientific research and expertise in aquaculture. An aquaculture platform was set up in 2009 as an informal network initiative of Ghent University (UGent) with all key stakeholders in Flanders, e.g. researchers, policy makers, farmers as well as retailers of aquaculture products such as fish, algae and feeds. In September 2012, structural support was received from the Flemish government when Minister-President Kris Peeters officially launched the Flemish Aquaculture platform¹. The platform consists of three entities: the previously established network, the strategic steering group aquaculture (SSAQ) with representatives of the sector and the information desk.

This platform is a convenient forum for information and knowledge exchange between the many actors involved: a yearly symposium is organised to enhance the intra-industry contacts, to inform the public about the latest developments in the aquaculture sector, to stimulate the interaction between the sector and the public authorities and to encourage entrepreneurship. A first symposium was organised in December 2012 and was a great success: more than hundred people joined the symposium. The platform's information desk will give advice to potential sponsors and producers, and monitor national and international trends and developments which will be communicated through the website of the platform amongst others. The SSAQ has, up to now, established four working groups whose task it is, respectively, (i) to design a long-term vision for aquaculture in Flanders with very clear priorities, (ii) to identify research activities necessary to support the sector, (iii) to organise an efficient information desk and (iv) to pinpoint legal regulations that impede the inflow of new young entrepreneurs interested to start a new aquaculture business in Flanders.

The long term goals of this platform are to stimulate the aquaculture sector in Flanders and as a possible result to become less reliant on imports of less sustainable aquaculture products.

References

¹ www.aquacultuurvlaanderen.be