European Commission - Speech

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Opening Speech by Commissioner Costas Kadis: Launch of the EU communication campaign on Aquaculture: "We work for you with passion"

Brussels, 25 March 2025

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, dear Ministers, Secretaries of State, honourable Members of the European Parliament, dear Members of the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions.

It is a true honour to welcome you all today to the launch of the EU-wide aquaculture communication campaign.

I am happy to see such a varied group with us. We have the representatives of EU countries, esteemed colleagues from EU institutions, many interest groups and producer organisations. I am particularly pleased that we also have several aquaculture producers with us. Welcome to all of you, welcome to Brussels, and welcome to those of you joining us online!

The story of aquaculture in the European Union is a story of opportunity, resilience and sustainability. This is a sector that is a source of high-quality, nutritious food; produced close to home, close to EU consumers, and with a low carbon footprint.

It is also a sector that is vital for supporting rural and coastal communities across the Union, often in places where job opportunities are few and far. But more than that, it is a sector driven by people - by their hands, their knowledge, and, above all, by their passion.

This campaign honours the people behind EU aquaculture - our dedicated producers - often entire families for generations- who bring their passion and expertise to work every day.

The people who have dedicated their lives to responsible food production, with a strong commitment to quality and sustainability.

This is what makes European Union aquaculture stand out, and we are proud to share this commitment.

And this is also why the producers themselves are the heart of this campaign. If you ask, most people will be able to describe a farmer – who they are and what they do.

But the same cannot be said of aquaculture producers. If you ask, many people will draw a blank. This is something we need to change and it will change.

This campaign, therefore, focuses on giving our aquaculture producers, our aquaculture farmers, a voice and visibility.

Our EU aquaculture ambassadors have shared with us their stories, experiences, challenges, and successes. Their lives. Through their voices, you will see that aquaculture is often more than just a profession. It is a way of life - a calling. Driven by passion.

Their stories highlight how aquaculture keeps their families and communities working, keeping them alive.

You will also see how aquaculture embraces tradition, while constantly evolving through innovation. Whether it is using advanced technology to improve the production process, embracing new techniques to reduce environmental impact, or preserving local species and ecosystems, EU aquaculture is at the forefront of sustainable AND competitive food production.

Today we have several of our campaign ambassadors with us.

I am proud to share the stage with you and share your passion .

Now, you might be asking why we need this campaign. Research has shown that in the EU, public awareness of the many benefits of EU aquaculture remains low. Citizens are not always aware of how the fish, shellfish, and algae on their plates are produced. Or of the rigorous standards that EU producers follow to ensure food safety, animal health and environmental responsibility.

Furthermore, many people are apprehensive about having aquaculture farms or activities close to their homes.

This campaign invites them to take a closer look and embrace the opportunities that aquaculture can bring to their communities. It is an invitation to learn more and to support EU aquaculture as an activity that allows them to eat healthy, local and sustainable food, while helping our coastal and rural communities thrive.

I stand firmly behind these words, because this campaign was developed in collaboration with national aquaculture experts and the Aquaculture Advisory Council.

It is the result of the significant steps the EU and its member countries have taken to ensure the sustainability and competitiveness of our aquaculture.

The strategic guidelines for aquaculture are a clear roadmap to go even further and adopt good practices and innovations to boost sustainability and resilience. With their Multiannual National Strategic Plans, EU countries have tailored this roadmap to their specific needs and priorities, supported by dedicated funding.

Of course, this campaign comes at an interesting point in time. As you might be aware, we are evaluating the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation, which set the strategic coordination of aquaculture. We are also assessing the implementation of the EU strategic guidelines for aquaculture, four years after their adoption.

In addition, the Commission will soon present the European Ocean Pact, designed to ensure coherence across all EU policy areas linked to the ocean. Aquaculture and fisheries will be an important part of the Pact, as well as the coming Vision 2040 for fisheries and aquaculture.

I hope that this campaign will strengthen partnerships among EU institutions, the aquaculture sector and other stakeholders in making the vision we have for this sector a reality. Together, we can support its growth, ensuring its continued competitiveness, sustainability, and alignment with the EU's political priorities.

Ladies and gentlemen, your support is crucial in spreading this campaign and its message – about the people of European aquaculture who work hard to provide us with a healthy source of protein.

I turn to our Member States. We need you onboard to ensure that aquaculture remains a priority in your national policies. I rely on you to help us spread this campaign and take actions to multiply its impact. I already emphasised this yesterday in the AGRIFISH Council.

To our colleagues in the EU institutions. Let us continue to build the right framework for this sector to thrive, ensuring it receives the recognition and support it deserves. Thank you for your support with the strategic guidelines, through your dedicated opinions and reports.

And to our aquaculture producers. We see you, we value you, and we stand by you. Thank you for your work. Thank you for your passion. And thank you for sharing your stories and supporting this campaign.

And I would also like to thank all the producers and sponsors who shared their products for today's food tasting.

Thank you all for your attention and support. I look forward to working with you all to showcase the story of EU aquaculture, to make this sector's passion a story of the future!

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