



GOOD BUSINESS

by John Dallimore

Water – quality, waste and law

I have just attended a small workshop as part of the European Union FP6 project AquAgriS, this one related to Food Quality and Safety, and left with an overview of water legislation from the perspectives of not only EU countries but also India and Israel.

The common views I came away with were: complexity, fragmented legislation and more to come – although hopefully in a slightly more rational form.

AquAgriS looking at exactly where water legislation is currently, and making some recommendations for how this legislation should be developed and harmonised in the future (details of a workshop for all interested parties to be hosted in Italy by AquAgriS in June are on this page).

But back to the main theme of this article: the essential for aquaculture – water. A good place to start is the following statement:

“Water is not a common commodity, but is a hereditary possession which must be accordingly protected, defended and treated.”

Although four-fifths of our planet's surface is covered by water, a recent report by the US National Centre for Ecological Analysis shows that nearly every water body is to some degree impacted by human activity. In many cases the impact is classed as ‘medium’ to ‘very high’ – and accounts for nearly 75% of all our oceans – while only 4% of all oceans remain undamaged by human activity.

Therefore the resource water, and the use of this resource, has to be regulated.

The problem then is how to create – and enforce – meaningful legislation. The need for ‘rules’ is undeniable, but how we do this in a manner that does not totally confuse and make any

aquaculture development impossible is another factor altogether.

To start this chain of thought, let's look at basic terminology:

● Emissions – the quality and ecological resilience of

by its use its quality has not been reduced is another issue.

A farming business may have to undertake exhaustive tests to show that it is not doing anything which creates emissions, but who is

legislated for, and what legislation is relevant?

Here, the workshop I attended showed that although every country administers its legislation differently, there is a commonality. This can be defined as confusion. It does not matter if you are in India, Israel or Germany – water legislation is a mess.

In the EU, the European Commission undertakes research, which is eventually developed in to guidelines, directives, etc, which are eventually ratified into member-state laws. These decisions from the central government are then given to the responsible ministries for enactment and enforcement.

Here, water legislation enters the fog of administration. The ideas, aims and laws are clear enough, but when a raft of ministries get hold of this, they all want part of the action, and with water being such a common resource, they all have their say.

Using Germany as an example – and Germany has a law for nearly everything – water is apparently administered by no less than five different ministries and has 12 different set of statutes. Add to this the German federal system, where regions also implement and administer legislation as they see fit, and the list of variations in water laws is almost endless. Existing projects are to some

degree allowed to exist as long as they do not significantly change their operations, but a new project has an enormous task of gaining all of the relevant permissions.

Aquaculture in Germany is not a big industry, and not likely to grow, but in India and developing nations who also suffer from a plethora of ministries and legislation, this is a major hurdle for the industry's development.

As the above mentioned US report makes clear, there is a need for management and legislation to maintain water quality and hopefully reduce bad or polluting water practices. However,

some clear recommendations produced that can be used to develop a clear strategy for the future.

These results will affect not only the EU, but also start to feed out in to other legislation worldwide: the EU is a major seafood importer, so producers will need to demonstrate that their water management meets its standards.

Only time will tell, but another product from the project will be the formation of a research network which will be at the forefront of future development. For any legislation to be effective it

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the water body that is going to be used by an aquaculture project

● Emissions – the concentrations of ‘uploaded pollutants’ that are added to the water by it being used in an aquaculture operation prior to it being discharged (typically feeds, metabolic products, fertilisers, medications or disinfectants, pesticides or other chemicals)

The real problem here for any aquaculture operation is the ideal that water must not be ‘contaminated’ by its use in aquaculture. For an aquaculture operation, the quality of its water is paramount, but proving that

controlling the imissions – especially bearing in mind the above report which states that our waters are not pristine in the first place? Water also passes from one place to another, and often through different jurisdictions, so who is responsible?

If legislation is going to be acceptable – and functional – who is going to take the responsibility for the imission quality? Surely not the aquaculture operation? (Of course, water legislation is not just aimed at aquaculture; it affects all water users. But here we are specifically talking about aquaculture.)

Also, if we accept the above, how are these issues

■ Former fisherman John Dallimore has, since 1989, been involved with aquaculture development and project management worldwide. Based in Hamburg, Germany, he works as operational director for TNC Partners, which provides project design and management, research project coordination, market analysis and business planning for aquaculture and fishery projects. He is also the MD of Aqua-Gold, which is a direct investment partner for aquaculture projects. www.tnc-partners.com and www.aqua-gold.com

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there is a dire need for research and analysis to assist in evaluating what is really necessary, and how to harmonise and simplify the legislation.

It is hoped that, after three years of the AquAgriS project, the main problem areas will be identified and

has to be operable by the users, enforceable by the administrators, and sensible in its scope so that it protects and enhances the use of a limited resource, even though we seem to have so much of it.

To paraphrase the poem the *Ancient Mariner*, “water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink” is not a scenario we wish to face, and unfortunately only sensible legislation will keep our waters safe for the future.

Waste utilisation workshop in Italy

A WORKSHOP will be held in Italy this June to discuss research into aquaculture, fishing and farming waste utilisation.

AquAgriS Project Workshop, which is being funded by the European Commission, has 27 partners, mostly from Europe but also representatives from Israel and India.

The project has already discovered that the term ‘waste’ is probably inappropriate, as a waste from one industry is raw material for

another. For example, fish heads and discards are raw materials for reprocessing and creating other products.

This means that waste has considerable interest to many industries, but to fully exploit this potentially valuable resource requires additional research.

Here, AquAgriS is contacting researchers throughout Europe and other states to assess their specific areas of study, and to create a network of like-minded researchers to enable

future developments in waste utilisation.

AquAgriS also recognises that the legislation that controls and regulates research activities in waste utilisation is fragmented, is often too stringent and has a range of targets that are not met.

Regulation enforcement also varies within the EU, and as such creates unfair competition.

At the recent workshop and meetings held in conjunction with the Bremen Fisch International Exhibition in

Germany, this was underlined by the presentations from participants from Germany, Italy, India, Finland, Iceland, Spain and Israel. Legislative frameworks exist, but there is considerable need for clarity and harmonisation in the use of waste water resource.

To assist aquaculture development in Europe, the coordinator of AquAgriS, the University of Salento, Italy, will be holding a technology transfer workshop from June 11 to 12. The workshop will

have several guest speakers who specialise in the field of waste water and waste water management, as well as speakers from AquAgriS who will report on issues researched by the project.

The workshop will be free and open to all who have a special interest in aquaculture and fisheries. For further information on the workshop, accommodation and how to get there, contact Vincenzo Zonno at vincenzo.zonno@unile.it ■ www.aquagris.org