DIVERSIFY

Enhancing the European aquaculture production by removing production bottlenecks of emerging species, producing new products and accessing new markets.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION – AIM:
An efficient, sustainable and market-oriented expansion of the EU aquaculture sector based on new fish species and products will reduce the dependence of the EU on imports, reduce the pressure on over-exploited fisheries in the EU and explore new segments and tailor-made products for the EU market. This is the objective of a newly approved Collaborative project named DIVERSIFY, funded by the European Commission (FP7-KBBE-2013, GA 603121).

The project DIVERSIFY has identified a number of new/emerging finfish species, with a great potential for the expansion of the EU aquaculture industry. Although the emphasis is on Mediterranean cage-culture, fish species suitable for cold-water, pond/extensive and fresh water aquaculture have been included as well. These new/emerging species are fast growing and/or large finfishes marketed at a large size and can be processed into a range of products to provide the consumer with both a greater diversity of fish species and new value-added products. The fish species to be studies include **meagre** (*Argyrosomus regius*) and **greater amberjack** (*Seriola dumerili*) for warm-water marine cage culture, **wreckfish** (*Polyprion americanus*) for warm- and cool-water marine cage culture, **Atlantic halibut** (*Hippoglossus hippoglossus*) for marine cold-water culture, **grey mullet** (*Mugil cephalus*) a euryhaline herbivore for pond/extensive culture, and **pikeperch** (*Sander lucioperca*) for freshwater intensive culture using recirculating systems.

These species were selected based both on their biological and economical potential, and to cover the entire European geographic area and to stimulate different aquaculture types. In collaboration with 12 SMEs and large enterprises, DIVERSIFY will build on recent/current national initiatives for species diversification in aquaculture, in order to overcome the documented bottlenecks in the production of these species and. Research will be carried out in the scientific disciplines of Reproduction and Genetics, Nutrition, Larval and Grow out husbandry, Fish health, Final product quality and Socioeconomics. The combination of biological, technological and socioeconomic research planned in DIVERSIFY are expected to support the diversification of the aquaculture industry and help in expanding production, increasing aquaculture products and development of new markets. To ensure the dissemination and implementation of the new knowledge that will be developed by the project, a wide range of dissemination activities have been planned, targeted both to the aquaculture production and its associated sectors (*i.e.*, food processing and retailing), as well as the European consumers.

Besides the technical improvement of the selected species, the socio-economic research in DIVERSIFY includes an applied market development approach solutions on perception of aquaculture products, market demand, buyer preferences, new product development, value adding and market development. These outcomes will help the EU aquaculture sector and the supply industry in targeted marketing and improvement of its international competitive position.

The project DIVERSIFY will be implemented by 38 Partners from 12 European countries, with a total budget of 11,8 million € and will last for 5 years (December 2013 – November 2018). The project is coordinated by the Hellenic Center for Marine Research (HCMR), which will carry out research in all six fish species included in the project, as well as all the scientific disciplines. The HCMR is the national research and advisory body for marine aquaculture, fisheries and the environment and is recognized as one of the prime aquaculture research organizations in Europe.

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