

From the EAS President



Elsewhere in this magazine you may find a report from the WAS conference in Bali.

I was fortunate enough to attend this meeting as well. As usual with WAS conferences, the event was large (perfect for networking) and extremely well organized. The trade show was sold out, and, as far as my perception enabled me to judge, well received by the attending business people.

However, perhaps the most striking feature of this Bali meeting was the enthusiasm

with which the Indonesian hosts received the event, from farmers up to the country's president himself.

For the first time ever in the history of WAS, a head of state found the conference of sufficient importance to come and open it with a welcome speech! Obviously, the present difficult international position of the country and the slow recovery of the tourism industry on Bali may have played a role in this decision, but measured by the level of Indonesian participants, both in the scientific sessions and in the exhibition, I believe this meeting came at the right time and right place for the local aquaculture industry.

As in most other Asian countries, aquaculture in Indonesia is increasing but nevertheless it also faces serious problems.

"If the European import regulations stick to the zero tolerance level for residues of chloramphenicol or other antibiotics, it will kill our shrimp farming industry," one governmental official told me. Local farmers and extension workers seemed to be desperate, because they have idea how to cope with these trade requirements. I had the impression that many Indonesian attendants hoped to find an answer for this matter at the conference, but obviously that is very naïve. The solution will have to come from the industry itself. Bold self-regulation should be enacted even if this requires an internal reorganization of attitudes, structure and communication.

Where did we hear this earlier? It is not so long ago that the European and western aquaculture industry was challenged with the same kind of discussions. Actually, to my view, we are still in that process of maturation. The challenges are known and more or less accepted nowadays, but the solutions are not always in place. Producing safe, healthy and environmentally friendly fish meat has become top priority but is not yet a guaranteed product everywhere. But at least we can argue that our industry has taken up the challenge.

EAS also participates in this process. In line with our strategy

to be a leading European player, we have taken the lead to bring together all stakeholders in an attempt to define protocols and rules that should guarantee sustainable aquaculture in Europe. Our director, Alistair Lane, should be given the credit for this initiative: he assembled a consortium, and, together with our friends from FEAP, wrote a proposal to the European administration for funding and is now steering this consortium (called CONSENSUS) to get its first achievements soon on the table. Thanks Alistair!

But I have more good news to tell you: (again) thanks to the efforts of our director, EAS has been successful in securing even more external funds for projects, some of which will be presented in future editions of our magazine in more detail. At least one side effect of these achievements is that our financial portfolio has improved greatly over the past months! This does not mean that the Board is dwindling away from its course in optimizing its operational efficiency. Actually we are quite on track, and I hope that we can give more information in our December issue.

One of the targets that we have set to ourselves relates to the way we organize conferences. If we want to be the European leaders, we should not go for less than providing the main conference in aquaculture in Europe, each year again. I have a firm believer that moving around over different locations in Europe would bring us closer to our members.

In the same way, our relations with national organizations deserve a fresh look. We should search for new relations, giving access to national organizations to participate in the path that EAS is going. Maybe we might develop a model that our sister organization WAS could imitate to strengthen its own relation with regional chapters or large national organizations such as the Japanese Society for Aquaculture.

At Bali, I attended the WAS board meeting as observer, and learned that they are struggling with similar questions. In their case it is the relationship between WAS chapters and existing local organisations; in our case it is our search for a more effective relationship with national aquaculture societies in Europe. If either of us can find the proper answer to these questions, we may learn from each other. It is just one more line of collaboration that we share. The most obvious, of course, is the next World Aquaculture meeting, jointly organized by EAS and WAS in Firenze. Note it in your calendar: 9-13 May 2006. It promises to become an even more interesting and splendid event than the past Bali Meeting was!

Johan Verreth