

From the EAS President



I have been a gentle reader of EAS Aquaculture Magazine for many years, and from now I will be writing the “President’s column” for the next two years as new president of the Society. First of all I think that it would be appropriate to introduce myself even if many of you know me, especially those who voted for me two years ago when (for the first time

in the history of EAS) the President was elected directly by the members.

My name is Laszlo Varadi, a Hungarian aquaculture engineer, who has been involved in aquaculture development for more than thirty years. Presently I am director of the Research Institute for Fisheries, Aquaculture and Irrigation (HAKI) at Szarvas, Hungary. HAKI is a leading aquaculture research institute in Central and Eastern Europe and its activities cover a wide range of aquaculture R&D works from genetics to socio-economy. As an aquaculture engineer, I have worked not only in Hungary but in many other countries (including Brazil, China, Cuba, Laos, Lesotho, Papua New Guinea, Vietnam) as a consultant for aquaculture development projects mainly for FAO. As a scientist, my main field of research is the development of environment-friendly and water efficient fish production systems. I am also involved in the activity of various international organisations such as FAO European Inland Fisheries Advisory Commission (EIFAC) as the head of the Aquaculture Sub-commission and the vice head of the Aquaculture and Fisheries Advisory Commission (ACFA) for the DG Fish and Maritime Affairs of the European Commission.

As an engineer, I have always been close to production and devoted a lot of time and energy to bring practical people and scientists together not only in my home country, where I am one of the vice presidents of the Hungarian Fish Farmers Association, but also on an international level. I was the convener of the EIFAC Symposium in Wierzba, Poland, in 2004 “Partnership between science and producers’ associations”. I would like to continue my efforts as President of the Society to improve mutual understanding and to enhance collaboration among stakeholders - especially between scientists and producers.

I have worked for EAS actively in various ways in the past twenty years. I was National Representative for Hungary, I was the initiator and organiser of the first EAS symposium outside Western Europe (Budapest in 1996), I worked as the head of the Eastern European Committee (whose establishment was initiated by our former president Michael New), and I also acted as keynote speaker and session chair of several EAS conferences. It may not be visible for many members but some of these EAS activities resulted in great changes in the aquaculture community especially in Eastern Europe. The Eastern European Committee of EAS was the cradle of the Network of Aquaculture Centers in Central and Eastern Europe (NACEE), which is an important network

now, including 31 member institutions from 13 Central and Eastern European countries. EAS was also actively involved in the organisation of the EIFAC Symposium in Poland, which was a good contribution to the enhancement of collaboration between science and producers.

But you may ask how I became the President of the Society, and why I applied for this prestigious position two years ago? As a matter of fact I never had the ambition to be President, besides being an active member of EAS and contributing the various activities of the Society. Johan Verreth past President of EAS approached me during the “Aquanor 2003” in Trondheim, and encouraged me to apply for Presidency. After some attempts of resistance I agreed and finally I was elected and have been working as a member of the Board in the past two years.

I joined EAS in a difficult period, when drastic (I use the word our Past President used) changes took place in the Society, as you have already read about in the last issue of Aquaculture Europe, and including outsourcing conference organisation and membership administration, as well as the restructuring (reduction) of Home Office staff. We had to implement these changes for the sake of financial stability of the Society and for the improvement of services for members.

The last Board had the difficult task of making hard tough decisions, but under the dynamic leadership of our Past President Johan Verreth, significant changes have been implemented and I believe that we made important steps in the right direction. As new President of the Society I would like to put emphasis on the consolidation of the results, and stabilisation the operation of the Home Office. The important task of this new Board will be to assist the improvement of membership services such as the development of a more interactive web site, the improvement of our magazine, the organisation of conferences and trade shows in non-conventional venues across Europe. We have to continue our efforts to improve membership involvement in EAS activities through the creation of EAS Working Groups, linkage with national aquaculture organisations, and also through the activity of the EAS Student Forum, which is becoming an important element of our society.

One of the remarkable events of the AQUA 2006 was the Italian Farmers Day, which brought together farmers, scientists, administrators from all over Europe. I believe that such forums can contribute substantially to strengthen the integrity of the aquaculture community in Europe. EAS could play a leading role to assist the organisation of such forums in the coming years including a “European Farmers Day” which could be a joint exercise with FEAP and other European aquaculture organisations and institutions.

Being an Eastern European who has been in traditional relationship both with Western and Eastern European institutions and colleagues, I would give special emphasis to the integration of Eastern European aquaculture communities into the European aquaculture area. The representation of

Eastern Europe in various European aquaculture movements (memberships, attendance at conferences, publications etc.) is still very disproportionate to the values the Eastern European region has in aquaculture. Further efforts are needed to alleviate the situation to which the enlargement of the EU gives a favourable environment. As President of EAS I am going to contribute to these efforts hoping that the enlargement of the EU will also mean the enlargement of EAS both in terms of members and importance in European aquaculture development.

I feel that favourable conditions are available for reaching our goals. The society has a new Board with ambitious, devoted and experienced members, and a restructured Home Office with higher flexibility and efficiency. The Society however cannot be successful without the active participation of its members. Therefore, your comments, criticism and offers for assistance are always welcome. I would like to close my message with the words of our previous President Michael New "Please help us to serve the Society better by complaining when we fail and congratulating us when we succeed !"

László Váradi
EAS President (2006-2008)