

# From the EAS President



This column is being written on my way back home from a most successful EAS Conference in Trondheim, Norway. About 400 delegates from nearly 40 countries attended the meeting, a top record for our Trondheim meetings. But, if I may rely on the many comments of different attendants, this quantitative success was also matched by an A-grade quality. Our society seems to have identified its Quality Seal for the Aquaculture Europe meetings: thematic focus, restricted number

of parallel sessions, compact conference facility, a thorough check and double-check on quality of keynote speakers and session chairs, and a proper allocation of papers to the different sessions. As a university professor, I enjoyed myself the high level of the scientific debate in several of the sessions which made it for scientists really of value to be there. Yet at the same time, in all sessions, the presence and interaction from the industry remained vivid, proving that science of a good academic level can indeed be of interest to industry and vice versa, the input of the latter is valued by academicians. These words may sound as talk of an EAS president, but I really believe that in Trondheim, EAS made the difference.

Next year, it will be a heavy challenge to reach the same quality in a large meeting such as the combined EAS-WAS meeting in Firenze will be. Yet, it is not impossible, and both the program and steering committee have worked hard in that direction already. Actually, the more details I receive from that meeting, the more enthusiastic I am. It will be large and world-wide covering, yet, the European aquaculture will receive a prominent place. The organisation invites all European (research and industry) consortia to contact the EAS Program Chair (Dr. Gavin Burnell, Cork) either directly or through the Home Office, if they wish to claim a (part of a) session or room for a workshop during or parallel to the meeting. Deadline for application is October 15!

My predecessor always included some comment on the European aquaculture scene in this column. Since good examples deserved to be followed, I'd like to spend some words on a subject that received a prominent place in the discussions at our Trondheim meeting: Ethics and Welfare in Aquaculture. Actually, it was not the first time that EAS gave attention to Welfare at its Aquaculture Europe meeting. We had a Behaviour and Welfare session already at AE 2002 in Trieste! Anyhow, while at that time, the discussion was still at the level whether Welfare should be

regarded as “absence of stress” or “presence of feelings of well-being”, in Trondheim a next aspect was brought forward: Ethical considerations. Both the plenary speaker (Dr. B. Damsgård, Tromsø) and session keynote speaker (Dr. Sunil Kadri, Glasgow) defended the view that ethics should set norms to what we consider as “Welfare” or not. Although the reasoning sounds very logic, it is a quite challenging view on how the industry should regulate itself. Ethics indeed are part of people's culture and civilization, and the question of ‘what's good or wrong’ is an integral part of this culture. Norms and standards for welfare would then end in regional regulations and the question is whether the industry needs this. Yet, it is increasingly clear that welfare regulations cannot be based on pure physiological or behavioural information only. Scientists can deliver and must deliver the latter knowledge. Society should subsequently define what the required norms are.

This is precisely what EAS tries to stimulate through its new EU funded project, CONSENSUS, which it runs together with FEAP and other organisations. CONSENSUS targets to bring together all stakeholders in an attempt to define protocols for different aspects of sustainable aquaculture, one of which is welfare. Farmers, environmentalists, animal protection agencies, the affluent and effluent industry, governmental officers, all will convene and try to set draft “norms” for welfare in the European aquaculture. If we can reach those goals, we really have made a difference again! I promise you to keep you updated about the progress.

Finally I'd like and add some other words used by my predecessor, Michael New: “Please don't forget our drive for increased EAS membership, which includes the opportunity for every existing member to obtain vouchers worth € 5 – 25 for each new member recruited. These vouchers can be used for any EAS services, including setting them against your own membership subscription” (Aquaculture Magazine August 2004). Remembering these words, the present board has spent a lot of energy in trying to launch a student group among its membership. We found a nucleus of enthusiastic young members who are willing to take the lead in this endeavour. They are skilfully and graciously chaired by Magdalena Trzenovzski from Hungary who organized a very successful Student Forum during our last meeting in Trondheim. They raised much enthusiasm among the candidate Group Members present at that Forum and I am very confident that we will hear more of them in the near future. Meet them for sure at our Firenze meeting!

Best wishes,

—Johan Verreth  
EAS President (2002-2004)