

FRANCE DELIVERS ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY FISHING AND AQUACULTURE

France's Grenelle de la Mer series of roundtable talks about environmental issues related to fishing and the oceans ran from February 27, 2009 through July 15, 2009, and gathered together the players concerned to define a national strategy for the sea and coastlines. A government bill based on this work will contribute to the development of sustainable fishing practices.

France controls the second largest global maritime area, covering one-tenth of the world's coral reefs.

Algal culture, fish, oyster and mussel farming account for around 30% of the volume of aquacultural products consumed in France. This percentage rises to 80% for shellfish. With 43,000 tons of trout produced each year, France is ranked second in Europe. More specifically, marine aquaculture produces bream, sea bass, turbot and salmon (more than 8,000 tons in total, including 4,000 tons of sea bass), as well as mollusks (13,000 tons of oysters and 60,000 tons of mussels).

Certain oyster farming companies have a long-standing tradition of exporting. The most innovative firms include Britexa in Chateaulin (Brittany), a small company with eight employees, which sells crepidula, a shellfish very popular in China as well as Scandinavia and Russia.

The French public sea research institute Ifremer (structured around five centers in Boulogne, Brest, Nantes, Toulon and Tahiti and 26 sites spread along the coastlines of mainland France and French overseas territories, funded by an annual budget of EUR 235 million) is at the leading edge of aquaculture research. It provides operators with essential information on the yields for marine farms, as well as the fight against diseases that may affect resources.

Powerful value-added innovation clusters are supporting this research and contributing to the development of new fishing-based products:

- The Aquimer cluster, based along the eastern stretch of the English Channel and the North Sea, has launched Seaminerol, a EUR 2 million program to develop new marine products.

- The Brittany Marine cluster, which through respect for the environment and liaisons with experts from the best aquatic laboratories is developing the Ormeaux project, focusing on a valuable and rare mollusk, highly sought after on the Japanese and Chinese markets.



- The PACA Marine cluster, which has launched the Aquapecten applied-research program to establish a protocol for farming Mediterranean scallops.

According to David Appia, chairman and CEO of the Invest in France Agency, "France offers a very favorable climate and ecological conditions to attract aquaculture businesses unable to find suitable sites in their own countries. France's innovation clusters represent a range of attractive business ecosystems in which innovative products can be developed, against the backdrop of the 'Grenelle' Sea Round Table Talks, which are opening up new prospects for this sector."