

NEW GAME-PLAN CASE-STUDY

DEVELOPING A ROADMAP FOR AQUACULTURE IN EUROPE

This case study summarises how we supported the pan-European Aquagenome Network in developing an industry-led collaborative Roadmap to strengthen European Aquaculture through the application of genomics.

BACKGROUND

We designed and facilitated a 'Roadmapping Workshop' for Aquagenome in June 2008 at Brunel University. The Workshop was supported by many European partners, including several from non-EU countries. It was attended by 19 participants from academic institutions and 10 from the aquaculture industry. The event was sponsored by the Genesis Faraday Partnership, which is now part of the new 'Biosciences' Knowledge Transfer Network.

The Workshop reflected growing interest in aquaculture as a source of fish protein to replace that hitherto obtained from marine fish stocks, to meet growing global demand for healthy food, and to enhance the economies of deprived rural and coastal communities. The Workshop recognised that aquaculture, like animal husbandry, could advance quickly through the adoption of advances in genetics and genomics.

THE PROCESS AND SPECIAL CHALLENGES

This 'Brain-Pool' Workshop involved a mix of stimulus presentations, group discussions and individual working. Special technology was used to capture and share participants' individual contributions through the use of mini-laptops linked by a wireless network (for details see www.new-game-plan.co.uk/Services/Brain-Pool.htm). This approach facilitated the discussion, development and assessment of the ideas considered in the Workshop.

The nature of the network and the subject-matter posed several challenges to Workshop design and delivery:

- How to engage a particularly diverse group in Roadmapping: scientists and business people from a dozen countries and with a dozen native languages.
- How to develop a Roadmap with content that would be relevant and useful both across Europe as a whole and in different countries with widely-differing aquaculture industries and scientific resources.
- How to cover a wide range of fish and shellfish species with differing biology and industry structures.

The challenges related to content were overcome by advance briefing on how Workshop contributions should be structured and the development of 'starter materials' covering drivers, research statements, knowledge transfer statements, blockers, and so on. These were fed into the Workshop once participants had had an opportunity to brainstorm entirely novel ideas. The participants were deliberately seated at mixed tables to facilitate networking and interaction between scientists, business people and nationalities. A 'table conductor' was appointed in each case to ensure that if any participant needed specific help, this was quickly made available.

WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

Over two days, participants gave detailed and thorough attention to each of the Roadmap building blocks. From the 1,200 individual verbatim contributions, we distilled the following outputs:

- 28 distilled Drivers and Outcomes relating to the future of the industry in Europe.
- 21 distilled traits in farmed fish for improvement, in particular by using genetic and genomic approaches.
- 53 distilled Research statements to take forward work on the desired traits.
- 28 distilled Knowledge Transfer statements to ensure effective exchange of know-how with industry.
- 25 areas for collaboration on research, and 13 areas for collaboration on Knowledge Transfer.
- 33 Promoters to overcome Blockers to progress on research and Knowledge Transfer.
- 38 specific suggestions for 'Next Steps' for inclusion in action plans to take forward the Roadmap.

The Workshop Synthesis Report brought together all the outputs for further development by the Network. It provided a clear and consolidated view to support the realisation of this important EU-funded project.

FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

Participants commented that the approach taken was a 'good way to stimulate ideas for a rather large and heterogeneous group of people'. The 'technology allowed rapid contribution from all participants' and the Workshop 'was not taken over by the usual suspects'. Participants also liked 'the profusion of ideas, interaction', and 'the possibility to say anything'. The Workshop was 'more productive than other meetings'. One commented that 'the technology used is very powerful. The stimulation of discussion was very effective'.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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