Aquaculture Funding Guidance Sheets

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| Fund purpose | Aquaculture accounts for about 20% of all seafood production in Europe, employing approximately 80,000 people. The aquaculture sector has been identified as a major component of ‘Blue Growth’ that has been tasked with delivering growth and jobs in line with the Europe 2020 strategy. European aquaculture is renowned for its quality and consumer protection standards, but outputs have remained constant since 2000 whereas global production has increased by around 7%. The European Commission intends to boost these production figures, and has identified the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) reform process as a means of kick-starting this. So, the good news is that there is money out there for aquaculture; both from European and UK funding sources. We have drawn together information on a number of different funds in order to help signpost you to a fund that may be right for your needs. There are also some basic rules of funding that would be useful to understand. Ask yourself:

• Do I want to develop products and services as a partner within a larger product?
• Do I want to operate independently of others and avoid being in a partnership?
• Am I happy to undertake the administrative burden that might be required to administer any successfully funded project?
• Do I have the resources needed in time and additional finance to support the completion of any new project?

These questions will help you decide if you want to pursue any funds or not. Some funding programmes are more complex (and therefore demand more resources to administer) than others. This burden, particularly for European money, can put many people off contributing to projects at the larger scale.

Finally, don’t chase money for money’s sake. Be clear what purpose you need money for, and then see if there is a fund that fits your needs. If you apply for funding just because it appears to be an easy option, you can find yourself committed to a programme of work that does not fit with your own business aims and ambitions. It is worth considering the risks involved, but as astute business people, we know you would consider these as a matter of course. |
Funding principles

1. Most programmes require you to contribute something to the project—very few provide you with 100% finance with no strings attached. It is likely that you may have to find up to 50% of the finance required to deliver your project.

2. Most funding programmes allow you to contribute ‘in-kind’ to the finances of the project you want to deliver. This means that you can use the staff time allocated to a project as an actual cost, and this way build up the collateral you are able to contribute to the programme as a whole. In some cases, but not many, this ‘in-kind’ support can completely replace any direct capital investment from yourself. Be clear about what levels of ‘in-kind’ support your particular funding programme accepts.

3. Funded projects have a clear beginning and end, with a set of deliverable actions and outputs or outcomes that need accounting for. Administering this can sometimes require additional staff time which may need to be written in to the programme. You may be able to keep all capital investments at the end of the project, but be clear about this from the start. You may not own the rights to any new innovations and developments.

4. There are some great sources of help for the larger funds and we would recommend that you contact the right people from the very outset of your project. Consultants can be brought online to help you work up project ideas and application forms, but many funds like you to work closely with the liaison officers for their particular programmes from the outset.

5. Many funding programmes operate through a system of ‘calls’ where an announcement is made seeking expressions of interest, at specific times of the year, for specific ideas and actions. Few funding programmes operate an ‘open access’ system where you can apply at any time of the year. It is worth keeping an eye on each funding programme as many will have ‘calls’ that relate specifically to aquaculture.

6. Befriend your local research facility/university. Many funding programmes have a research, development and innovation requirement that allows for better transfer of knowledge and practice between research and business. There are many specific networks to help you with this.

European funds

Europe has been going through something of a transition period for many of its 2007 – 2013 funding programmes, and the new themes and priorities being pursued may appear unfamiliar to many. This is a result of the Europe 2020 strategy and the need for all funds to contribute to the economic and social prosperity of the EU as a whole.

As a result, innovation and social benefit are high on the agenda, as are the efficient use of resources and a requirement to work with community-led process as far as possible. We believe that projects stand the most chance of success funding success if they can clearly trace back their aims and objectives directly to, not only the priorities for the funding programme, but the Europe 2020 strategy itself.

It can help to know what sort of language to use when writing an application form, but the contact points can help you with this, and guide you through the development (or lifecycle) of your project as a whole.

We are impressed at the number of potential opportunities for funding there are now in Europe, and many funding programme require the contribution of SMEs from the outset. Many of the European grants require you to comply with their rules for being a Small and Medium Sized Enterprise (SME), which are defined as: ‘The category of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is made up of enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding €50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding €43 million’. The EU rules also restrict aid to businesses that have fewer than 750 employees or a turnover of less than €200 million.

This represents a green light to many aquaculture businesses, so good luck with any applications and projects you develop.
### European funds (continued)

The funds we recommend you consider first are:

- European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
- Horizon 2020
- European Regional Development Fund
- Interreg programmes

There are also other appropriate funds specific to your location. Please review the funding sheets themselves to find out more.

It is also worth remembering that most European money is matched from within each country. So, for example, the EU might contribute €100 million to a fund, but then each Member State will also be contributing money to the overall pot, usually doubling what is available. The UK contributes a large amount of money to European funds.

### UK funds

Specifically UK-oriented funding programmes are fewer and further between than EU funds, and some organisations, such as Marine Scotland, provide an application process that is actually acting as a conduit to European funds—Marine Scotland, for example, had an initiative that provided [easier access to funding for aquaculture](#) that was actually accessing the European Fisheries Fund (EFF, as was). There is also money available locally through Fishery Local Action Groups (FLAGs), but again, this is actually accessing what is originally European money.

There are some UK-specific funds available through the Research Councils, as well as the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Scottish Aquaculture Innovation Centre. Contact them directly for more information about this new fund, and to receive real-time updates about connecting and collaborating with others on innovation in aquaculture.

There are also some business innovation awards through organisations such as the Virgin Business Innovation Fund that provide an injection of funds for specific business ideas and delivery. Virgin Business has established a [new investment fund](#) specifically for fish farming.

You may also find that foundations such as Oak, Pew and Waterloo have programmes and priorities that fit your requirements. The [Pig-shed Trust](#) is able to help you find funds to deliver your particular aquaculture programmes of work. There are also organisations such as Blue Marine Foundation, the Marine Conservation Society and World Wildlife Fund who might be able to develop projects in partnership that look at the long-term sustainability of seafood from aquaculture sources.

We have heard recently that a number of charitable organisations and philanthropic foundations are collaborating on a fund for sustainable fisheries and seafood as a whole. Details are scarce as this has yet to come in to being, but more is expected on this new funding stream in 2015.

### Closing comments

There is money available for aquaculture. Many funds at both EU and UK level are going through a period of transition with a change in emphasis to innovation and growth within a framework of sustainability and socio-economic many with a focus on SMEs. Your ideas will need to have a strategic element to them in order to be successful, showing the benefits to wider society in many cases.

Many European countries are far better at successfully funding their work programmes...it would be good to see the UK aquaculture making more of the opportunities on offer. Good luck!