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Competition for space is critical, says Borg

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Joe Borg

COMPETITION for space is a critical challenge facing the European aquaculture industry, European Union Fisheries Commissioner Joe Borg told a major trade conference this morning.

Opening Aquaculture Europe '07 in Istanbul, Dr Borg said that, when it comes to allocation of space, aquaculture can be at a disadvantage in arbitrations made by local and national authorities. He said that science-based marine planning is the solution to this as it can help to dispel mis perceptions and the sometimes unequal treatment of aquaculture.

“The development of new technologies like

offshore and recirculation are highly promising avenues to address the lack of space and we will continue to support their development in terms of research and pilot projects,” he said.

He added that Integrated Multi-trophic Aquaculture (IMTA) – whereby different species such as salmon, seaweed and sea urchins are grown together – is another way to optimise space occupation and promote sustainability.

Other challenges facing the industry include competition for: fish feed and oil; clean water; and public research funds.

Dr Borg said that demand for fish and seafood is growing and that a major increase in production is forecast. The bulk of this increase can only come from aquaculture, he added.

“World aquaculture will grow considerably in coming decades. Where does Europe stand in this development and what role can it play?” he asked.

The conference heard that the European aquaculture sector has considerable strengths

including world-class research and technology.

“But it also suffers from constraints that companies in developing countries do not face,” Dr Borg said.

“This brings challenges. We need to recognise these, particularly with regards to the environment, and we need to respond to society’s concerns regarding its development.”

He added that the European industry has the scientific and technological means to address these concerns and to develop sustainably.

Aquaculture Europe, the annual meeting of the European Aquaculture Society, is being held in conjunction with the trade show, Future Fish Eurasia, and runs until Saturday. The theme of this year’s conference is “Competing Claims”.

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