



## **New Project Aims to Develop Advanced Tools and Research Strategies for Parasite Control in European Farmed Fish**

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**ParaFishControl** is a new €8.1 million EU Horizon 2020-funded research project that aims to improve our understanding of fish-parasite interactions and develop innovative solutions and tools to prevent, control and mitigate harmful parasites which affect the main fish species farmed in Europe (Atlantic salmon, rainbow trout, common carp, turbot, European sea bass, and gilthead sea bream).

Aquaculture is the fastest growing food producing sector worldwide, currently providing half of all fish for human food. Fish disease prevention and management are essential for the sustainability of the aquaculture industry. **ParaFishControl** aims to improve the productivity, economic performance and image of European aquaculture through improved biosecurity, health and welfare of farmed fish.

Dr Ariadna Sitjà-Bobadilla, **ParaFishControl** project coordinator, explains: “This project is very timely, as parasitic diseases constitute a key constraint for sustainable finfish aquaculture in Europe. Parasites and related infections are increasingly responsible for severe damages in farmed fish, which significantly reduces aquaculture production and economy.”

**ParaFishControl** will increase our knowledge of parasite biology, their life-cycles and interactions with fish hosts of commercial interest. The project will develop prophylactic measures, diagnostic tools and methods to detect parasites in fish and the environment. It aims to improve current treatments, and develop new products and advanced strategies for parasite treatments. An innovative Food Safety Programme will be established to decrease and avoid risks of transfer of parasites from farmed fish to humans, and to strengthen the competitiveness and public image of European aquaculture. The outcomes of the project will benefit the whole aquaculture chain, from fish farmers to the consumer.

The project held its kick-off meeting in Benicàssim, Spain, in May 2015. At the meeting, the project’s partners (29 institutions from 13 countries) discussed the vision, goals and planned methodologies of the project, and a promising exchange between the participating scientists and aquaculture industry partners was initiated.

At the Biology Centre, Dr Astrid Holzer, head of the Laboratory of Fish Protistology is coordinating the research on Myxozoans in common carp. Myxozoans are microscopic parasites closely related to jellyfish, that cause a number of important diseases in freshwater and marine aquaculture systems worldwide. In carp, a rise in quickly multiplying myxozoan stages in the blood has been noticed in European ponds in recent years. The Fish Protistology Lab is investigating key molecules and mechanisms myxozoans use to exploit carp, with the long term aim to design effective anti-parasitic strategies.

The project’s work is now ongoing. To stay informed about the progress and results of **ParaFishControl**, visit the project’s website at [www.parafishcontrol.eu](http://www.parafishcontrol.eu).

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