European Commission

PRESS RELEASE

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EU RESEARCHERS BREED BLUEFIN TUNA WITHOUT THE USE OF HORMONES

A scientific consortium involving 13 partners from eight countries including Malta, achieved remarkable results as scientists managed to breed bluefin tuna in captivity and provide the basis for future ecologically sustainable aquaculture of this threatened species.

The bluefin tuna project started in the early 2000's when several scientists involved in bluefin tuna research met in Cartagena, Spain for the DOTT international conference (DOTT - Domestication of Bluefin tuna Thunnus thynnus). This was followed by the first partner project, called Repro-DOTT, that looked at the reproduction of bluefin tuna in the wild and in captivity.

The outstanding results achieved during this project prompted the consortium to apply for an EU grant to develop the Self-DOTT project (Self-sustaining aquaculture - Domestication of Thunnus thynnus). Locally, the Malta Aquaculture Research Centre (MAR), formerly known as the Malta Centre for Fisheries Sciences (MCFS), coordinated the Maltese experiments and the sampling of bluefin tuna from the wild, whereas MFF Ltd was responsible for holding broodstock for egg collection, a large-scale broodstock nutrition experiment, egg transportation trials, and larval rearing trials.

A spokesman for the consortium said that, "Thanks to the EU grant, which amounted to almost €3 million, the consortium recruited specialists at all levels, including divers, and scientists, and developed new technologies and techniques that made it possible to manage the reproduction of this species and monitor fish in captivity."

Currently, the same partners are participating in a two-year EU 7th Framework Project, Trans-DOTT (Translation of domestication of Thunnus thynnus to a commercial application) to develop economically viable methodologies that provide sustainable tuna aquaculture.

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