



AQUABATOR: International Partnership and Ukrainian Science Working Together to Restore Aquaculture

A press conference dedicated to the implementation of the international AQUABATOR project was held in Mykolaiv, Ukraine, at the premises of the UABCS (Ukrainian Association of Business Support Centers), the lead partner, together with its project partners: Sinop University (Türkiye), the Bulgarian Association for Technology Transfer and Innovation (BATTI) (Bulgaria), and Kherson State Agrarian and Economic University (KSAEU) (Ukraine).

The AQUABATOR project brings together international expertise, scientific research, and modern technologies to promote the development of aquaculture and support the post-war recovery of southern Ukraine.

The **AQUABATOR** Project Coordinator in Ukraine from **Kherson State Agrarian and Economic University**, Doctor of Biological Sciences **Pavlo Kutishchev**, emphasized that the development of aquaculture is one of the key areas for strengthening the country's food security.

"Today, approximately 80% of the fish products consumed by Ukrainians are imported. Our task is to develop domestic production, promote modern technologies, and train specialists who will work in Ukraine's aquaculture sector," said Pavlo Kutishchev.

According to him, one of the project's key outcomes will be the creation of the international **AQUABATOR digital platform**, which will bring together producers, researchers, equipment suppliers, entrepreneurs, and students.

"We are creating an international aquaculture incubator that will provide free training courses, practical video tutorials, advisory support, and access to modern technologies. It will serve as a comprehensive knowledge platform for the development of the aquaculture sector," the project coordinator stressed.

Special attention within the **AQUABATOR** project is being given to practical training. The project team is currently filming a series of educational video courses at an aquaculture enterprise that was relocated from the Kherson region to the Odesa region due to the war. Despite the relocation, the farm has preserved its technologies, restored its full production cycle, and retained its workforce of around 150 employees.

"We are producing video courses at an enterprise that operates a complete fish production cycle—from hatchery and incubation to processing finished products. It is an inspiring example of a Ukrainian business that has restored its operations despite the war and is now sharing its practical expertise with the next generation of aquaculture professionals," said Pavlo Kutishchev.

Before the full-scale invasion, the Kherson region was one of Ukraine's leading aquaculture hubs. The region was home to major fisheries and aquaculture enterprises, many of which were destroyed or forced to cease operations as a result of Russian aggression.

At the same time, the region's most valuable asset—its scientific expertise—has been preserved. Despite its relocation to Kropyvnytskyi, **Kherson State Agrarian and Economic University** continues to educate specialists in the **Aquatic Bioresources and Aquaculture** programme. The Faculty of Fisheries and Environmental Management has maintained its strong scientific school, which has spent more than 50 years developing and implementing innovative technologies for the aquaculture sector. Today, the university remains one of the key partners of the international **AQUABATOR** project.

During the press conference, media representatives actively raised questions about the prospects for revitalising Ukraine's aquaculture sector. For many years, they have reported on the scientific achievements and innovations developed by **Kherson State Agrarian and Economic University** in the field of aquaculture.

In conclusion, Pavlo Kutishchev emphasized that the project is designed to deliver tangible benefits for the aquaculture sector.

"Around 200 entrepreneurs and future professionals will gain up-to-date knowledge, practical skills, and the essential tools needed to establish and develop their own aquaculture businesses. Through this project, we are laying the foundation for the recovery and sustainable development of Ukraine's aquaculture sector in the post-war period," he stressed.

Background

The **AQUABATOR** project (*Incubator for Sustainable Aquaculture in the Black Sea Basin*) is implemented under the **Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme 2021–2027** with financial support from the **European Union**. The content of this material does not necessarily reflect the official views of the European Union.

The project is led by the **Ukrainian Association of Business Support Centers (UABSC)**, Ukraine, in partnership with **Sinop University** (Türkiye), the **Bulgarian Association for Technology Transfer and Innovation (BATTI)** (Bulgaria), and **Kherson State Agrarian and Economic University (KSAEU)** (Ukraine).

The project's objective is to establish an innovative model of cooperation between science, education, and industry to support the sustainable development of aquaculture across the Black Sea Basin.

As part of the project, the partners are developing the international **AQUABATOR digital platform**, digital twins of aquaculture farms, interactive training programmes, virtual tours, and other digital tools to foster innovation and capacity building in the aquaculture sector. By 2027, smart aquaculture farms will be established in Ukraine and Türkiye, serving as modern training, demonstration, and innovation centres.

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