**Hellenic Republic**



**The Agricultural University of Athens,**

**The International and Public Relations Office,**

Address: 75 Iera Odos Str., Gr- 11855 Athens, Greece,

Information: Rania Hindiridou

Tel. No.: (+30) 210 5294841

E- mail: public.relations@aua.gr

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**PRESS RELEASE**

**The Agricultural University of Athens at the “Blue Horizons” Conference held by the Ministry of Rural Development and Food.**

The “Blue Horizons” Conference, organized by the Ministry of Rural Development and Food, took place on Saturday and Sunday, February 24 and 25 2024, respectively, on *Fisheries, Aquaculture and Fisheries - related Tourism* at the premises of the Old Olive Mill in Eleusis. Indeed, Stakeholders engaged in Fisheries, Aquaculture and Fisheries - related Tourism have participated in that Conference, wherein a discussion has been held on the future of Fisheries, as well as the formulation of a National Strategy for the specific sector.

It is worth mentioning that the Minister of Rural Development and Food, Mr. Eleftherios Avgenakis, has announced the reintroduction of recreational fisheries licence, while the Minister of Environment and Energy, Mr. Theodoros Skylakakis, has proposed the adoption of compensatory measures, in cases where the development of other activities affects fisheries, like the wind power generators installation in marine parks.

It is also noticeable that the Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Mr. Virginijus Sinkevičius has highlighted through a video message, the importance of fisheries and aquaculture for Europe, because they offer a number of posts, inasmuch providing considerable sources of income to local communities. Furthermore, the Commissioner has mentioned that Greece is to be congratulated on its Strategy pursued in the aquaculture sector, which has been growing every year, thus blossoming a national plan in respect of the water areas, would be equally beneficial for the country.

Besides, the Vice-President of the European Commission for promoting the European Way of Life, namely, Mr. Margaritis Schinas, in a message sent by video, has declared that reduction in over-fishing has been feasible in the Mediterranean Sea, at a rate below 60%, in addition to his reference to the close collaboration between European Union and Greece, specifically about Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Subsequently, the Vice Rector for European University, Internationalization and Student Affairs of the Agricultural University of Athens, Ms. Helen Miliou, Professor and Director of the Laboratory of Applied Hydrobiology, by the greeting addressed, has mentioned the challenges of the sector in the new era, inasmuch highlighting the significance of the issues of the Conference "Blue Horizons". The Vice Rector has also stressed the necessity for the preservation of biodiversity of aquatic ecosystems and the proper management of marine resources, based on an ecosystem approach towards the achievement of balance between water resources and sustainability of fisheries. At the same time, however, the Vice Rector has laid emphasis on the need for ensuring social cohesion and the economic prosperity of the communities related to the fisheries sector. Furthermore, Ms. Miliou has additionally marked that the marine spatial framework of aquaculture in Greece and the Management of Areas of Organized Development of Aquaculture (AODA) demand prompt actions. The Vice Rector has welcomed the emergence of prospects for Fisheries - related Tourism by means of that Conference, as well as topics associated with the whole supply chain, pertaining, in particular to the modern commercial environment. By her concluding remarks, Ms. Miliou has emphasised that: “Persuading the consumers of the nutritional value of fisheries products, besides gaining their trust, as far as the quality and safety of these specific foods, is highly appreciated”.

 The General Secretariat of the Ministry of Rural Development and Food, Mr. Georgios Stratakos, a graduate of the Department of Animal Science and Aquaculture of the Agricultural University of Athens, has referred to the recent legislative changes, comprising the re-establishment of the Register of Recreational Fishermen, with a view to combating illegal economy, on the pretext of recreational fisheries. Also, the General Secretariat has made a reference to the major benefits, provided by the Fisheries - related Tourism, not only about our national tourism product and its quality, but also and mainly about the economic welfare of the greek region.

Throughout the Conference, a number of topics have been expanded. Specifically, on the thematic issue entitled “Balance between Water Resources and Sustainability”, the Associate Professor, Ms. Nafsika Karakatsouli from the Laboratory of Applied Hydrobiology of the Agricultural University of Athens, has underlined the direct link between the use and the manufacture of fish feed, through the sustainability of aquaculture, emphasizing the rational use of food for fish and the appropriate selection of raw materials, in order to enhance sustainability in Greece.

Moreover, Mr. Stefanos Kalogirou, Assistant Professor at the same Laboratory, has elaborated on the subject area “Overcoming the pitfalls of bureaucracy”, by expressing the following statements: “Conservation of marine fisheries resources constitutes a common responsibilty, extending far beyond the limits of any individual entity or organisation. It is imperative to recognize and embrace the crucial role of innovations, which are led by the community in this effort. Indeed, innovations driven by the community, offer the possibility to the local stakeholders of actively participating into the decision making procedures, thus greatly contributing to the development and implementation of conservation initiatives, adjusted to the unique needs, challenges and their ambitions”.

At the particular Conference, a wide variety of gastronomy events with fish and seafood used as raw material, have been held in parallel, in addition to the scientific discussions scheduled. Students from the Institute of Vocational Training of Anavyssos, chefs and cooks from the local restaurants in Eleusis, too, have presented traditional recipes, special appetizers and delicacies, food styling ideas, as well as performing demonstration of proper fish filleting.

All the interested parties may find some extra information on the following link: <https://www.synedrioalieias.gr/synedrio/>.