Preface

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Aquaculture of percid fish has been in development for over two decades now. Since the first attempts at intensified production of these high market value fish species, research on different aspects of the culture of percids has been carried out by several scientific institutions and companies across Europe. As with the advancement of any new candidate species and its production technology, scientists and researchers alike have been challenged with the development of efficient and consistent protocols for the reproduction, larviculture, and ongrowing stages. Up to present day, several international and many national scientific projects have been commissioned and successfully implemented. The vast majority of these projects have addressed the most pressing challenges identified between the scientific community and commercial entities involved in the production of percid species. However, despite the progress since the first commercial production was established, significant gaps remain. Both in terms of biological understanding of species requirements and the practical implementation of efficient commercial culture. In the first phases of commercial development, farms developed relatively fast in terms of scaled up production technology making use of existing knowledge gained by academic and industrial research. They acquired the necessary experience and started to grow their production. However, in recent times, scientific institutions—largely as a result of increased funding—have been able to gain insights into fundamental aspects of percid reproduction and production protocols, which was hitherto not available to the commercial sector. Following initial breakthroughs, the anticipated expansion of the sector has stalled as commercial companies have found it difficult to overcome technical roadblocks in production. These constraints in the expansion of this emerging sector were the catalyst for the

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establishment in recent years of the European Percid Fish Culture Group (EPFC; www.epfc.net), a thematic group gathering scientist and practitioners under the patronage of the European Aquaculture Society (EAS).

Since the formation of the EPFC in 2012, significant progress has been made in improving and streamlining communication between and among researchers, fish farmers, and other agencies specializing in percid culture. Through the organization of workshops and species-specific meetings, the EPFC has sought to progress the visibility of percid culture within the wider aquaculture sector. This increase in knowledge transfer was highlighted in 2017 with the organization of the first strategic research and innovation workshop held in Carrick-on-Shannon, Ireland. This workshop stimulated further, more specific knowledge transfer activities among researchers, farmers, and other stakeholders along the percid supply chain. One of the most important knowledge-transfer events organized by EPFC—a practical, hands-on workshop on controlled reproduction of pikeperch—will be organized in 2019 for the third time at INAGRO, Belgium. Participants spend one week improving their theoretical and practical knowledge, working arm-in-arm with experienced researchers. Furthermore, in 2019, the EPFC established a Core Group (EPFC-CG) aimed at formalizing the collaboration between members. The core group which is funded by members provides a focused platform for developing specific activities and research in targeted areas. It is hoped that significant progress in commercial activities will result from such an approach.

The current special issue, “European Percid Fish Culture,” of Aquaculture International journal was initiated as a follow-up to a successfully organized full-day session on percid fishes during AQUA2018; the joint conference event on aquaculture was organized by WAS and EAS in Montpellier, France, 25–29 August 2018. This session, held on August 28, was considered as another major step toward the expansion of percid aquaculture, this time gathering scientists in the field in one room, for joint and open discussion. For this special issue, presenting authors of the percid session were prioritized in the submission process, though other contributions related to percid aquaculture were also welcomed. Both the scientific session and Special Issue were convened by the Coordinating Team of the EPFC, serving also as the Guest Editors of the Special Issue and the authors of this Preface.

This Special Issue (SI), “European Percid Fish Culture,” incorporates the most relevant and high-quality research papers related to the aquaculture production of percid fishes. In the end, the SI contains articles focusing exclusively on the two fish species—Eurasian perch (*Perca fluviatilis*) and pikeperch (*Sander lucioperca*)—representing the aquaculture of percids in Europe at present. We hope that this special issue will be an important contribution to further research on aquaculture of percids as well as a support to the growth of this aquaculture production sector.

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