



ORNAMENTAL AQUATIC TRADE ASSOCIATION  
LTD.

*"The Voice of the Ornamental Fish Industry"*

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Dear

I am writing from the UK's Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association. We represent the interests of the many businesses in the UK which support the ornamental fishkeeping hobby.

As the new European Parliament session starts we are sure you'll be invited to many interesting events. We believe there is one such event being organised by Eurogroup for Animals in October called *Putting animal welfare at the heart of Europe*.

We are a very small trade association so we don't have the financial weight to organise such an impressive conference. But we still hope our voice can be heard on this important subject.

There are several points where we agree with Eurogroup for Animals' concern about animal welfare in the EU. Of course, we should all be concerned about the welfare of animals in our care – whether we sell them or keep these 'wet pets' in our home aquariums. As a trade association, we do a lot of work through our videos and care sheets to educate the public on how to keep fish. Our training courses and members' Code of Conduct also promote good welfare for the businesses involved in supplying the public. You can find all these on our [website](#).

And we agree the illegal trafficking of wildlife must stop. Within our sector we have worked with the authorities to uncover illegal coral and clam suppliers. But it is criminal smuggling and trafficking of wildlife that's the problem and should never be confused with honest trade. Expenditure on pets contributes €12 billion in tax to EU governments and health savings in the EU associated with keeping a pet is in excess of €20 billion annually.

And there is a bigger picture. In the past, Eurogroup for Animals has asked MEPs to support a pledge to **'ban the import of wild-caught animals and restrict the number of exotic species that can be imported and traded in the EU.'** If successful, this would have a devastating effect on the fishkeeping hobby, loved by many of your constituents. But it would also hurt the livelihoods of people, often surviving on meagre incomes in remote river and coastal communities across the world, who rely on the more valuable earnings they get catching fish for the aquarium trade. If you want to know more about how wild caught fish can be good news for everyone please read our accompanying leaflet.

This year we launched our #handsoffmyhobby campaign and you may be contacted by keen aquarist voters who want to share the passion they feel for their 'wet pets'. In the run-up to the 2014 European election we found MEPs who supported Eurogroup for Animals' above pledge thought it wouldn't cover fish. What we would ask is that you are wise to how sweeping statements on animal welfare from groups such as these can disguise very particular aims. Pets come in all shapes, sizes and species – they're not just cats and dogs – and we would ask you to recognise the value that all pet ownership contributes to the social and economic wellbeing of Europe.

Yours sincerely  
Keith Davenport  
Chief Executive  
Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association