

*Le Directeur Général
Dr Laura Giuliano*

Monaco, le 16.01.2026

In memory of Fereidoun Rassoulzadegan († 14 January 2026)

Fereidoun Rassoulzadegan was a pioneering and visionary scientist whose work fundamentally transformed our understanding of marine microbial ecology.

His research, spanning from the early 1970s into the 2000s, explored microzooplankton, protists, bacteria, and the microbial loop. He was among the first to demonstrate the central role of protists in oceanic food webs, showing that even in oligotrophic systems, protist biomass could exceed that of metazoan zooplankton. He revealed the dynamic nature of microbial communities, the rapid fluctuations of rare species, and the key trophic interactions that underpin ecosystem functioning.

Fereidoun's work anticipated major paradigm shifts in marine ecology. He contributed to the emergence of the microbial loop concept, elucidated nutrient and carbon cycling at the microbial scale, and pioneered methods to quantify microbial growth, grazing, and mixotrophy. His vision extended to biogeochemical pathways, the impact of nutrient limitation, and later, the incorporation of molecular tools to explore microbial diversity, viral ecology, and the deep-sea frontier. Through these contributions, he established Villefranche-sur-Mer as a leading center for aquatic microbial research.

I first met him at *Il Ciocco*, a defining moment early in my career, where, as a young PhD student, I had the rare privilege of encountering the leading figures of our field. Even then, Fereidoun combined exuberance with precision, curiosity with rigor, a brilliance that was immediately palpable. Our paths intertwined across many years, from the 8th SAME conference in Taormina (2002) to the PNEC jury (2004–2006), and later, through the proximity of Villefranche and CIESM headquarters.

Beyond his groundbreaking science, Fereidoun was a generous friend, full of energy, warmth, and joy. His presence was magnetic, impossible to ignore and his warmth and hospitality made every moment spent with him enriching and uplifting. He inspired not only through his intellect but through his humanity, his insistence on rigor, and his delight in sharing knowledge and life alike.

Fereidoun's influence, both personal and scientific, will endure, and his absence is deeply felt. We will always remember him with admiration, gratitude, and affection.

Goodbye, Fereidoun, my dear friend.

Laura

