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REPORT

Towards a sustainable and competitive European aquaculture sector: current status and future challenges
(2017/2118(INI))

Committee on Fisheries

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

Towards a sustainable and competitive European aquaculture sector: current status and future challenges
(2017/2118(INI))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to the Commission communication entitled 'Strategic Guidelines for the sustainable development of EU aquaculture' (COM(2013)0229),

– having regard to Regulation (EU) No 304/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2011 amending Council Regulation (EC) No 708/2007 concerning use of alien and locally absent species in aquaculture[1],

– having regard to Directive 98/58/EC concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes[2],

– having regard to Commission Regulation (EC) No 710/2009 of 5 August 2009 amending Regulation (EC) No 889/2008 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007, as regards laying down detailed rules on organic aquaculture animal and seaweed production[3],

– having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 of 22 December 2004 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations and related operations and amending Directives 64/432/EEC and 93/119/EC and Regulation (EC) No 1255/97,

– having regard to Commission Regulation (EC) No 889/2008 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products with regard to organic production, labelling and control[4],

– having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 of 28 June 2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91[5],

– having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC[6],

– having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1379/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the common organisation of the markets in fishery

[1] OJ L 88, 4.4.2011, p. 1.
[2] OJ L 221, 8.8.1998, p. 23.
[3] OJ L 204, 6.8.2009, p. 15.
[4] OJ L 250, 18.9.2008, p. 1.
[5] OJ L 189, 20.7.2007, p. 1.
[6] OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22.

and aquaculture products, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1184/2006 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 104/2000[7],

– having regard to Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2328/2003, (EC) No 861/2006, (EC) No 1198/2006 and (EC) No 791/2007 and Regulation (EU) No 1255/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council[8],

– having regard to Regulation (EU) No 2017/1004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017 on the establishment of a Union framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the common fisheries policy and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 199/2008[9],

– having regard to its resolution of 4 December 2008 on the adoption of a European Cormorant Management Plan to minimise the increasing impact of cormorants on fish stocks, fishing and aquaculture[10],

– having regard to its resolution of 17 June 2010 on a new impetus for the Strategy for the Sustainable Development of European Aquaculture[11],

– having regard to its resolution of 8 July 2010 on the arrangements for importing fishery and aquaculture products into the EU with a view to the future reform of the CFP[12],

– having regard to its position adopted at first reading on 23 November 2010 with a view to the adoption of Regulation (EU) No .../2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Regulation (EC) No 708/2007 concerning use of alien and locally absent species in aquaculture[13],

– having regard to its resolution of 8 September 2015 on enhancing the potential of research and innovation in the blue economy to create jobs and growth[14],

– having regard to its resolution of 12 May 2016 on traceability of fishery and aquaculture products in restaurants and retail[15],

– having regard to the Commission staff working document on the application of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) in relation to aquaculture' (SWD(2016)0178),

– having regard to the Commission document of 2015 entitled 'Overview report:

[7] OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 1.
[8] OJ L 149, 20.5.2014, p. 1.
[9] OJ L. 157, 20.6.2017, p. 1.
[10] OJ C 21 E, 28.1.2010, p. 11.
[11] OJ C 236 E, 12.8.2011, p. 132.
[12] OJ C 351 E, 2.12.2011, p. 119.
[13] OJ C 99 E, 3.4.2012, p. 177.
[14] OJ C 316, 22.9.2017, p. 64.
[15] OJ C 76, 28.2.2018, p. 40.

Implementation of the rules on finfish aquaculture' (DG(SANTE) 2015-7406 - MR),

– having regard to the Commission communication of 29 June 2017 on a European One Health action plan against antimicrobial resistance (AMR) (COM(2017)0339),

– having regard to the economic report on the EU aquaculture sector of 2016 by the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF),

– having regard to the Eurobarometer report on 'EU consumer habits regarding fishery and aquaculture products' (2017) and the complementary analysis by the European Market Observatory for Fisheries and Aquaculture Products (EUMOFA),

– having regard to the scientific opinion entitled 'Food from the Oceans' produced by the High-Level Group of Scientific Advisors in November 2017,

– having regard to the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries,

– having regard to the OIE Aquatic Animal Health Code,

– having regard to Articles 42 and 43(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),

– having regard to its resolution of 6 July 2017 on promoting cohesion and development in the outermost regions of the EU: implementation of Article 349 of the TFEU[16],

– having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,

– having regard to the report of the Committee on Fisheries and the opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (A8-0186/2018),

A. whereas the aquaculture sector, including marine and freshwater fish farming, as well as farming of molluscs, crustaceans, seaweed and echinoderms, is an innovative economic sector, which is the fastest growing food production activity, and, potentially, a high-technology sector requiring structural and research investment and long-term operational and financial planning;

B. whereas the fish farming and shellfish industries play an important and valuable role in terms of the economy, employment and social and environmental matters with respect to improving the quality of life of the coastal and inland areas of the Union and of outermost regions and to contributing to the nutritional and food security of Europeans; whereas there are certain factors which adversely affect aquaculture production, including environmental and climate-related factors but, above all, animal predators; whereas, as shown by a number of studies, these predation issues are having a significant impact on production;

C. whereas the Commission communication 'Strategic Guidelines for the sustainable development of EU aquaculture' emphasises four priority areas to be addressed in order to unlock the potential of EU aquaculture: administrative procedures, coordinated spatial planning, competitiveness, in particular by linking up the sector with

[16] Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0316

science, and a level playing field;

D. whereas the same communication recommends that Member States should draw up multiannual national strategic plans for aquaculture that would analyse the key shortcomings and the issues needing to be resolved, set out shared objectives and, where possible, establish indicators to assess the progress made towards achieving these objectives;

E. whereas maintaining local ecosystems and stocks must be a key priority objective, preventing the displacement and destruction of local fisheries and farming;

F. whereas despite good intentions and efforts EU aquaculture is stagnating, in contrast with increasing growth seen in other regions of the world;

G. whereas it is estimated that aquaculture production in the EU only covers 10 % of the domestic demand for fish and whereas more than a half of the demand for fishery products comes from imports from third countries;

H. whereas aquaculture should be seen and treated as a form of agriculture, especially in the case of pond farming;

I. whereas the backwardness of the outermost regions in the development of aquaculture is particularly significant;

J. whereas the recent opinion of the High-Level Group of Scientific Advisors on the question put to the group by Commissioner Vella, namely 'How can more food and biomass be obtained from the ocean in a way that does not deprive future generations of their benefits?', contains the following recommendations: 'Mainstream a "food from the ocean" paradigm of responsible culture ... into broad EU and global systems-level policy agendas'; and: 'Take the development of mariculture in Europe to a higher and more strategic level via a comprehensive, concerted policy framework – this includes issuing guidance on the inclusion of mariculture requirements in the implementation of the 2014 EU Directive on Marine Spatial Planning and extending technological cooperation to mariculture under sustainable fisheries partnership agreements (SFPAs) between the EU and southern partner countries';

K. whereas starting up or expanding an aquaculture farm in the EU requires obtaining various permits and authorisations, and whereas the procedure for obtaining these official documents is not harmonised at EU level and is, in general, slow, complex and lacking legal certainty and economic predictability; whereas this situation risks hindering the development of the sector and could discourage business investment and result in excessive costs for the sector, in addition to indirectly encouraging imports from third countries;

L. whereas the most complex procedures for aquaculture operations are those related to environmental requirements (environmental impact assessments, strategic environmental assessments and surveillance procedures), but, paradoxically, the slowness and complexity of these administrative procedures do not always ensure environmental protection, indeed on the contrary sometimes making it difficult to establish socioeconomic, environmentally sustainable and quality aquaculture farms ;

whereas there are differences between freshwater and marine aquaculture; whereas differences in the sub-sectors of aquaculture require different practices in terms of managing stocks, feeding and reproduction; whereas the necessary consideration must be given to these differences when drawing up regulations for EU aquaculture and, in particular, sustainable environmental standards;

M. whereas bureaucratic complexity and delays, specifically those relating to licensing and planning, represent inaction that inevitably results in economic and socio-labour costs to potential investors in the areas in which aquaculture farms are established, with a particular impact on female and youth employment;

N. whereas for adequate spatial planning the different needs of the various users, together with the need to protect nature, must be taken into account and efforts must be made to reconcile them; whereas the unavailability of locations, the lack of adequate spatial planning and the conflict with other economic activities have a considerable effect on the development of EU aquaculture in some regions, since the aquaculture sector may have less weight than other 'powerful' sectors;

O. whereas spatial planning is one of the prerequisites for the long-term development of aquaculture and the necessary means of ensuring suitable planning locations for aquaculture, taking into account other activities in the areas concerned;

P. whereas EU environmental legislation is based on directives (the Marine Strategy Directive, the Birds and Habitats Directives), and whereas it is therefore left to Member States and to local and regional authorities to transpose and apply them with a certain degree of discretion; whereas, consequently, there is no uniform implementation throughout the EU and this leads to legal uncertainty for enterprises and farms and a lack of predictability for investors, and creates an uneven playing field;

Q. whereas according to the 'Food from the Oceans' scientific opinion, the only way to obtain significantly more food and biomass from the ocean in a short period of time is to harvest organisms at the bottom of the food chain, such as macroalgae and bivalve molluscs;

R. whereas different national or regional legal frameworks for aquaculture can lead to businesses having different legal requirements even if they are active in the same sea basin, which in turn risks distorting competition;

S. whereas the examples of good cooperation on the basis of voluntary agreements and other agreements between conservationists and the sector are to be welcomed; whereas, while the positive examples of contributions by aquaculture to the maintenance of good water quality and aquatic ecosystem services are to be welcomed, it is important also to acknowledge and seek to reduce the negative impacts which aquaculture can have on the local environment and water quality; therefore encourages further innovation and initiatives to ensure a long-term sustainable and profitable sector;

T. whereas bivalve mollusc farming and macroalgae cultivation require a balanced supply of nutritive salts in the environment;

U. whereas, in light of the above, this kind of freshwater fish farm also qualifies as an

environmental protection service safeguarding the quality and quantity of water and deserves far more recognition and support from EU decision-makers than is currently the case;

V. whereas EU products have to comply with a series of stringent environmental, animal health, animal welfare and consumer protection rules and standards covering production operations, feed, welfare, transport, processing and social conditions of employment, which directly affect the costs of production; whereas the result is excellent quality and sustainable products which may be more expensive and, thus often, less competitive than the imported ones, which frequently arrive on the EU market at low prices due to practices which are unsustainable from an environmental, social and labour point of view, and whose production has been accompanied by poor animal welfare and health standards;

W. whereas some aquaculture companies depend greatly on energy resources, adding to the cost of aquaculture production;

X. whereas the consumption of fish – a food containing proteins, fatty acids, vitamins, minerals and essential micronutrients that benefit human health – should be increased, and whereas the excellent quality of EU seafood should constitute a major competitive advantage for EU aquaculture;

Y. whereas global consumption of fish is steadily increasing, in parallel with the global growth of the population;

Z. whereas additionally, there is not always coherence among EU trade, social and environmental policies: for example, the EU grants Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP and GSP+) status to vulnerable developing countries, with the aim of allowing them to pay fewer or no duties on exports to the EU, giving them vital access to the EU market and contributing to their growth; whereas, at the same time, some of these countries, for example some Asian countries, produce aquaculture products which do not comply with the environmental, animal welfare, health, social and labour standards that EU operators must meet and which, in some cases, are in violation of human rights;

AA. whereas the EU is also heavily dependent on the importation of fisheries products from third countries for aquaculture feed, and whereas more sustainable, alternative feed has so far been insufficiently researched and promoted;

AB. whereas the EU’s external trade in aquaculture is in deficit and unfair competition is taking place between imported third-country and EU aquaculture products and EU produce, to the detriment of food quality and consumer health;

AC. whereas aquaculture in third countries offers opportunities to EU investment;

AD. whereas the differences between the products of European aquaculture compared to those of third countries in terms of quality, environmental footprint, social behaviour and respect for the welfare of animals cannot be perceived by European consumers when the information they receive about them is insufficient or inaccurate (especially in relation to country of origin, defrosting or identification of species);

AE. whereas the EU legislation regarding information on aquatic products for the consumer is clear and whereas control thereof is the responsibility of the authorities of the Member States; whereas, however, the failure actually to provide this essential information for the consumer is generally notorious, in the case of both fishmongers and restaurants; whereas this situation of insufficient implementation undermines the competitiveness of EU aquaculture;

AF. whereas sustainable fish farming is based on rearing healthy animals, and for this it is essential to develop specific and innovative veterinary tools, especially vaccines and antibiotics, which should be used in a responsible and restrictive manner that ensures animal and consumer health and welfare, and safe and nutritional aquaculture products, with no detriment for the environment and wild species; whereas the EU animal health regulations must also consider the particularities of aquaculture and specificities of fish species when dealing with the treatment of infections and diseases and the impact on product quality;

AG. whereas the European One Health action plan against antimicrobial resistance (AMR) observes that immunisation through vaccination is a cost-effective public health intervention in efforts to combat antimicrobial resistance[17], which likewise applies to aquaculture;

AH. whereas the image that European society and consumers have of aquaculture varies from one Member State to another but in general there is clearly room for improvement;

AI. whereas although there is always room for improvement through better practices, the bad image of this activity is not always due to real problems (environmental, quality or safety aspects), but to the preconceived idea that consumers have of aquaculture; whereas a significant part of this situation is due to the belief that the real impacts of aquaculture in some third countries (developing countries) are also encountered in the EU, which is not true;

AJ. whereas the widely varying practices with respect to aquaculture lead to significant differences in product quality, environmental impact and sanitary conditions, among others, leaving the consumer frequently uncertain of the resulting product;

AK. whereas the poor reputation of aquaculture affects its governance by public administrations (licensing, planning, etc.), but also its marketing conditions;

AL. whereas it is important to note the potential of freshwater aquaculture, inland aquaculture with enclosed waters, integrated multitrophic aquaculture and recirculation systems or aquaponics in urban zones for the improvement of food security and the development of rural areas;

AM. whereas crustaceans, molluscs and aquatic plants, such as algae, are also an important resource for aquaculture;

AN. whereas research and innovation have a fundamental role to play in unlocking the

[17] European Commission (29 June 2017), A European One Health action plan against antimicrobial resistance (AMR), p. 10.

potential of sustainable aquaculture; whereas production can be sustainably increased through innovation-led expansion, the regeneration and cleaning of waters, the use of renewable energies, and energy and resource efficiency, while reducing environmental impacts and providing environmental services;

AO. whereas EU-level standard protocols of scientific data that enable the supervision and improvement of management and production practices, as well as their environmental and health impact, are of considerable importance;

AP. whereas the farming of native or endemic species should be given preference in order to reduce the environmental impact and make aquaculture more sustainable;

AQ. whereas difficulties in accessing credit and a considerable time-lag between investment and first sale (in general three years or more) risk discouraging investors;

AR. whereas the pre-financing conditions offered by banks and financial institutions are increasingly strict;

AS. whereas the procedures, which in most cases are not sufficiently clear to users, and the plethora of documents that have to be submitted in order to obtain funding from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) are discouraging for the applicant; whereas the approximately EUR 1 280 million available in the current (2014-2020) programming period is not sufficient to develop the European aquaculture sector; whereas, in addition, there is an extremely low rate of absorption by the Member States;

AT. whereas sustainable aquaculture must take account of potential impacts on wild fish stocks and water quality, but, conversely, it also needs healthy fish stocks and excellent water quality;

AU. whereas available data show a growing gap – estimated at 8 million tonnes – between the level of consumption of seafood in the EU and the volume of captures from fisheries; whereas sustainable aquaculture can, together with sustainable fisheries, contribute to ensuring long-term food and nutrition security, including food supplies, as well as growth and employment for Union citizens, and to meeting the growing world demand for aquatic food, providing that sustainable sources of feed are used for aquaculture activities and environmental degradation is prevented; whereas it can thus contribute to the overall objective of filling the gap between consumption and production of seafood in the EU;

AV. whereas in aquaculture one kilogram of low-value fish can be transformed into one kilogram of high-value fish (as in the case of capelin to turbot, where the value increases from EUR 0.10 to EUR 7 per kilogram);

AW. whereas young people are less interested in working in the aquaculture sector or investing in and developing it due to poor communication and a lack of financial prospects and stability, which make it unattractive to younger generations;

AX. whereas sustainable aquaculture owned and managed by the community can be of socio-economic benefit to coastal peripheral regions and play a positive role in the blue economy.

AY. whereas freshwater aquaculture accounts for 20 % of the performance of the sector in Europe as a whole, and whereas EU support should match this proportion; whereas the divergent nature of freshwater aquaculture means that it needs special rules and a separate chapter in the legislation on the EU's common fisheries policy;

AZ. whereas research and innovation are crucial in achieving more sustainability and competitiveness for the aquaculture sector on the EU market;

AAB. whereas freshwater aquaculture projects can also be carried out with ex-post financing, and whereas this often requires disproportionate efforts from investors, with the result that in many cases fish farmers do not dare to embark on projects; whereas the intensity of support is in most cases inadequate;

Unlock the potential of EU aquaculture

1. Recognises the positive effects that sustainable aquaculture, including both marine and freshwater sectors, can have on employment and the economy of the Union, in general, improving the productivity and quality of life of its coastal and inland areas; stresses the need to boost its development, diversification and innovation by promoting higher levels of production of fish, crustaceans, molluscs, algae and echinoderms from aquaculture and improving the competitiveness of such products (to improve EU aquaculture production so that it reaches at least the current global aquaculture growth rate within five years and to encourage investment in more energy-efficient and economical equipment), and increasing their consumption and contribution to food and nutrition security for EU citizens; insists that this must be done while conserving the proper functioning of the marine ecosystems so as to allow the continued practice of profitable aquaculture, commercial fisheries, and other sustainable uses of the marine environment;

2. Believes that the EU needs to increase its production in the aquaculture sector, in particular with the aim of reducing pressure on natural fishing grounds; takes the view that fish-based feed should be sustainably sourced and should not jeopardise the maximum sustainable yield objectives of the common fisheries policy and that nutrient loads should be controlled; stresses the importance of cooperation between researchers, the aquaculture industry, feed producers, and environmental organisations and administrations; stresses that EU aquaculture should take into account quality, sustainability, food safety, environmental aspects, and animal and human health, and should be a model in this regard; takes positive note of new initiatives with land-based aquaculture, especially in sensitive seas and EU areas with closed waters, and believes that stronger measures are needed to make aquaculture a more efficient, economically viable, socially responsible and environmentally friendly sector, fulfilling a greater share of the European demand for fish and reducing Europe's dependence on imports;

3. Welcomes the Commission communication ‘Strategic Guidelines for the sustainable development of EU aquaculture’ and its identification of the areas where efforts need to focus in order to unlock the potential of EU aquaculture so that it, together with sustainable fisheries, can contribute to the objective of filling the gap between consumption and production of seafood in the EU in a way that is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable;

4. Stresses that freshwater aquaculture is still an insufficiently explored opportunity for improving food security and developing rural areas.

5. Stresses that sustainable growth needs to be based on: business investment predictability and legal certainty, which can be created through more efficient administrative frameworks, improved governance transparency, clear and homogenous and simplified criteria for granting licences across the EU, common disease management procedures and access to appropriate veterinary treatments that are not harmful to animal and human health, effective spatial planning, the availability of guidance documents, exchanges of best practices, the support of the Aquaculture Advisory Council, and adequate financial support; points out that all these factors can contribute to sustainable growth;

6. Appreciates the conclusions and recommendations of the scientific opinion on 'Food from the Oceans' of November 2017 relating to maritime, fisheries and aquaculture policy development and implementation in the coming years to help increase the quantity of sustainable food coming from the oceans;

7. Calls on the Commission to support the industry in its efforts to reduce its dependence on wild fish stocks for the production of fish feed, including through increased use of seaweed and other algae;

8. Calls on the Commission to encourage the further development of the emergent seaweed aquaculture sector;

9. Recognises the potential of aquaculture to contribute to food and nutrition security for EU citizens and the need for sustainable and healthy diets, climate-smart, animal welfare-friendly and environmentally sustainable food systems, and the circularity and resource efficiency of food systems, encouraging innovation and the empowerment of communities;

10. Reiterates that the development of European aquaculture has to be linked to the basic and vital need for self-sufficient, safe, nutritional and sustainable food production and put higher on the EU global agenda;

11. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to invest in research, studies and pilot projects for innovative, future-oriented, environmentally responsible aquaculture practices, including Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture Systems (IMTA), Aquaponics, and Recirculation Aquaculture Systems (RAS), that reduce the impact of aquaculture farms on habitats, wild animal populations and water quality, thus contributing to an ecosystem-based approach;

12. Asks the Commission to make a thorough analysis and ensure a proper follow-up regarding each of the recommendations of the High-Level Group of Scientific Advisors;

13. Stresses that any sustainable European aquaculture policy must take account of the characteristics and different needs and challenges of the various types of aquaculture production and develop tailor-made measures that also account for geographic differences and the potential effects of climate change; calls, therefore, on the Commission, in the common fisheries policy post 2020, to set out individual rules

tailored to the characteristics of each sub-sector;

14. Highlights the potential of freshwater aquaculture as well as inland aquaculture with enclosed water, integrated multitrophic aquaculture and recirculation systems and aquaponics in urban areas; stresses that freshwater aquaculture is still an insufficiently explored opportunity for improving food security and developing rural areas, but that it plays an important social role by providing rural employment in the poorest areas, as well as playing an environmental role in maintaining valuable wetlands and providing a wide range of ecosystem services, which go far beyond its economic value.

15. Stresses the importance of launching coordination instruments, study groups and EU activities, with a view to determining the cases in which mollusc production is significantly jeopardised by the predatory action of gilthead seabream (Sparus aurata), and to seeking sustainable and environmentally friendly solutions;

16. Recognises the potential of aquaculture and the complementary processing and exporting of fish products as an indigenous industry for employment and economic benefit, especially for rural coastal and island communities;

17. Underlines how important it is that the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) should provide protection for mollusc production areas, as laid down in the now repealed 'Molluscs Directive';

18. Points out that, in an environment in which macroalgae or bivalve molluscs are to be produced, the reduction of nutrient inputs to achieve good environmental status must take into account the natural abatement capacity of the organisms being farmed or cultivated;

Simplifying administrative procedures

19. Emphasises the vital role of local and regional authorities in the development of European aquaculture, including in implementing the multiannual strategic plans drawn up by the Member States;

20. Stresses that the sustainable growth of aquaculture needs to be based on business investment predictability and legal certainty, which requires, notably:

a) simplification and acceleration of administrative procedures – less red tape – at EU, national and regional level, making the greatest possible use of information and communication technologies, while ensuring that the marine environment is not further degraded.

b) improved transparency and proper planning;

c) better coordination as regards the shared competences of the EU, the Member States and, where appropriate, regional and local authorities;

d) fast, clear and transparent licensing procedures accompanied by limited timelines for agreement, so as not to discourage investors;

e) close monitoring by the Commission of the Member States' multiannual national strategic plans;

f) Commission guidelines for national strategic plans for a uniform application of the EU legislation (mainly environmental and for protecting health and ensuring that neither ecosystems nor fishing activities are harmed);

g) a coordinated legal framework between different regions and Member States sharing the same waters in order to ensure fair competition and efficient environmental policies;

h) close cooperation between the Commission and the competent authorities (national, but also local and regional) in the implementation of EU legislation (mainly sanitary and environmental) as well as supporting coordination of national or regional legislation where necessary;

i) mechanisms for the exchange of information and best practices between Member States, through an open method of coordination of national measures concerning business security, access to Union waters and space, and the simplification of licensing procedures;

j) adequate public financial support at EU and national level for sustainable and responsible aquaculture production, innovation and development;

k) better incorporation of the aquaculture and fisheries perspective in the Union's trade agreements;

21. Suggests, with regard to the administrative system, the creation, as soon as possible, of a 'one-stop shop', which would take on and exercise all responsibilities, allowing relevant documents to be submitted to a single administrative body; believes this would improve the relationship between the end-user and the different levels of public administration;

22. Suggests establishing a simplified or 'fast-track' licensing system, whereby the competent administration grants a provisional certificate permitting those operators who meet predefined criteria to commence their activities; points out that these criteria could be based on applicants' history or on the fact that they have put forward a pioneering aquaculture project in terms of innovation and/or sustainability, or on the establishment of reserved aquaculture easement zones where uses that are incompatible with aquaculture are defined in advance;

Equity in interaction with other sectors

23. Underlines that appropriate spatial planning should take into account all sectors (holistic approach), sustainability issues and food security, without favouring powerful economic sectors to the detriment of aquaculture; stresses that spatial planning does not necessarily have to entail the segregation of activities in certain areas, but rather balanced compatibility between them, and that this can potentially bring benefits to all;

24. Suggests supporting a more active and important role and implication of aquaculture organisations and fisheries local action groups (FLAGs) in the decision-making process,

through regionalisation, in order to ensure the best approach for each specific region;

25. Points out due consideration must be given to the aquaculture sector's interests and that it must be treated fairly when it interacts with other sectors, e.g. in spatial planning;

26. Urges the Commission and the Member States to elaborate spatial planning maps in order to identify possible areas where aquaculture and other activities may coexist;

27. Points out that spatial planning and licensing conditions are the most likely reason for the unwillingness of other important or powerful sectors to share space;

28. Points out that, in order to ensure a level playing field in access to marine resources, the socioeconomic and environmental impact studies required for aquaculture should also affect all sectors competing with it, such as, tourism or raw materials extraction;

29. Urges the Member States and national authorities comply with the EU legislation on waters and the regeneration and cleaning of contaminated areas;

30. Stresses that the legislation should be adopted after consultation, on an equal basis, of all interestedparties;

Adapting the legislation to aquaculture's needs

31. Stresses that environmental sustainability must go hand in hand with social and economic sustainability (sustainability has three pillars), and that due consideration needs to be given to the current and potential contribution of aquaculture to food security in the Union;

32. Welcomes the industry's best practices and examples of good cooperation on the basis of voluntary agreements and other agreements between conservationists and the industry, including in Natura 2000 areas; welcomes the many examples of contributions by aquaculture to the maintenance of good water quality; recognises the aquatic ecosystem services delivered by the industry and calls for incentives to strengthen them; stresses that the introduction of further legal complications affecting aquaculture is undesirable from the point of view of sustainability and socio-economic development;

33. Stresses that the EU legislation should be better adapted to aquaculture's realities, specificities and needs in the framework of the common fisheries policy and in coherence, inter alia, with EU environmental legislation, in line with the objective of achieving a good environmental status for all marine waters by 2020 and taking into account the importance of female and youth employment in the sector;

34. Stresses that, where implementation of EU legislation is problematic or inconsistent, guidelines on its interpretation and best practices should be issued;

35. Reiterates that the sector should be more closely involved in decision-making;

36. Urges the Commission to improve the limited contribution of aquaculture production to the domestic demand for fish, estimated at 10 %, and reverse the fact that more than half the Union's demand for fish comes from imported products;

Enhancing the competitiveness of EU aquaculture within and outside our borders

37. Calls for imported products of aquaculture to be required to meet the same environmental, food safety and socio-labour standards and respect for human rights that EU operators must meet and deplores the fact that there is still no level playing field in this domain, and that dangerous distortions of competition are a serious problem for EU operators;

38. Highlights the current situation of European pond farmers as they are struggling with substantial losses affecting their entire stock due to predators like otters, herons and cormorants; underlines that those predators also kill the spawn of zander and carp and as a result limit significantly the breeding and reproduction of freshwater fish; calls, therefore, on the Member States to apply existing derogations in the case of herons and cormorants and calls on the Commission to carry out a review regarding the conservation status of the otter and to allow, where necessary, the removal and control of those predators;

39. Calls for more and better origin and border controls for imported products and, at internal level, measures to combat illegal or 'furtive' aquaculture practices that affect the internal development of the sector;

40. Points out that the EU should export its sustainability standards and know-how; believes that this is especially relevant in the case of neighbouring regions that produce similar species to those produced in the EU and especially with third countries sharing the same waters as the EU;

41. Calls on the Commission to ensure that under trade agreements with third partners preferential market access is made conditional upon respect for sustainability and animal welfare standards equivalent to those applicable in the EU;

42. Calls on the Commission to sponsor, as part of the EU's policy on cooperation with developing countries, support and training measures designed to help promote sustainable aquaculture and steer the awareness of aquaculture producers in those countries towards a policy on quality and higher production standards, particularly as regards the environment, hygiene and social standards;

43. Urges that steps be taken to encourage EU investment in aquaculture projects in third countries;

44. Calls on the Commission to continue ensuring that EU import rules are respected, including as regards farming procedures that comply with environmental, hygiene and social standards, in exporting third countries so that a level playing field can be implemented internationally; considers, at the same time, that the results of the monitoring of aquaculture processes in third countries should have a decisive influence on the renewal of export authorisations for products to the EU;

45. Asks the Commission to assess the effects of Brexit in the field of aquaculture;

Improving consumer information

46. Insists on full and complete implementation of the EU legislation on labelling and consumer information, both in fish markets and in the hotel, restaurant and catering sector (HORECA); believes that this is important for all fisheries products (and not only aquaculture products), both imported and EU-produced; considers that the Control Regulation should be adapted and reinforced to this end;

Ensuring Animal Welfare

47. Asks for the establishment of a specific label for the recognition of products from EU sustainable aquaculture and stresses the need for transparency for consumers also in connection with aquaculture products imported from third countries, by reinforcing traceability;

48. Takes the view that the strategy on slaughter should include proposals to ensure processes for developing effective parameters for humane methods of killing fish, in accordance with OIE and EFSA Guidelines, and to ensure that equipment used for slaughtering fish works in accordance with those parameters, and that effective humane slaughter of farmed fish is implemented, assessed, evaluated and certified throughout the EU.

Availability of veterinary products

49. Points out that EU veterinary legislation must be better adapted to aquaculture's realities and needs, taking into account different species and operating differences;

50. Stresses that a real EU common market is required for vaccines and other veterinary products that protect animal and human health, especially for 'minor' species;

51. Observes that the relatively higher costs of diagnosis, antimicrobial alternatives and vaccination in comparison with widely used antibiotics are regrettably an obstacle to achieving greater use and a higher rate of vaccination, as aspired to by the action plan[18]**;** welcomes the fact that in the action plan the Commission announces incentives to increase the uptake of diagnostics, antimicrobial alternatives and vaccines[19];

52. Urges the Commission to establish the obligation to provide information on the use of vaccines and antibiotics in aquaculture in view of possible risks to human health and the ecosystem;

53. Believes that the Commission and the Member States should devise practical incentives and measures, including improved implementation of or, if required, amendments to, Directive 2006/88/EC, to promote an integrated chain approach to AMR and increase the use of antimicrobial alternatives, diagnostics and vaccines in aquaculture and thereby to promote prevention, control and eradication of diseases and antibiotic resistance in aquatic animals cost-effectively and maximise the survival, growth and production efficiency of aquatic animals;

54. Underlines the need to favour scientific research in European and national programmes

[18] A European One Health action plan against antimicrobial resistance (AMR), p. 15.
[19] Ibid., p. 12.

on shellfish and fish health and the development of new veterinary products for aquatic species;

55. Notes, in this vein, that antibiotic resistance is a serious problem across human and animal medicine, and calls on the Commission to limit the use of antibiotics to situations where there is a risk of an epizootic in the aquaculture establishment and not simply as a preventive measure and to assess their impact on the risk of transferring resistance to consumers;

Better promotional campaigns and communication

56. Points out that better promotional campaigns and communication at EU level on the benefits of aquaculture and fish consumption are needed;

57. Calls on the Commission to encourage strong and long-lasting EU generic campaigns explaining the sustainability merits of EU aquaculture products, focusing on their high quality, animal welfare and environmental standards compared to those imported from third countries, as in the case of the label 'Farmed in the EU';

58. Stresses the need to encourage and finance promotion campaigns for regional quality schemes, covered by Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012, such as protected designations of origin; calls on the Commission in cooperation with the Member States to launch an EU-wide information campaign for consumers and businesses on aquaculture in general and in particular the differences between the stringent and comprehensive standards on the European market and the lower-level standards applicable to imported products from third countries, with particular emphasis on the problems caused for food safety and public health by the introduction into the Union of particularly resistant micro-organisms and antimicrobial resistance (AMR); stresses the value of the EU legislation on welfare of farmed fish during rearing, transport and slaughter in meeting consumers' expectations and advertising product quality guaranteed by EU standards in comparison with third country imports;

59. Calls on the Commission to set aside a suitable amount from the EU's promotional budget for promoting fish and other fisheries and aquaculture products; believes that a wide-ranging marketing campaign based on common principles and covering all the Member States, set up as a collective measure and with 80-100 % support intensity, should be launched in order to increase the awareness and acceptance of EU aquaculture product;.

60. Supports the aquaculture FLAGs of the FARNET network in the promotion of their activities at local, national and European level;

Supporting research and innovation

61. Points out that the EMFF, which allocates EUR 1.2 billion for the sustainable development of EU aquaculture, and other sources of funding, such as Horizon 2020, provide an opportunity for innovation;

62. Points to the importance of FLAGs, which are contributing to the development of fisheries and aquaculture in given areas by strengthening local fishery resources and

encouraging innovation and diversification in fisheries and aquaculture;

63. Calls on the Commission to support research into and the fight against the ostreid herpesvirus;

64. Is concerned about the impact of some invasive alien species on European aquaculture; stresses the importance of scientifically based, effective and proportionate implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1143/2014 on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species (IAS) in order to protect both European aquaculture and native species and ecosystems; calls on the Commission and Member States to support research and innovation with a view to combating the most problematic IAS;

65. Urges the Commission and Member States to support the fight against the Japanese oyster borer;

66. Stresses that Horizon 2020 and Framework Programme 9 (FP9) should continue to support aquaculture research activities that improve the competitiveness of the sector and respond to the issues highlighted in the Commission's conference of 2016, 'FOOD 2030', and in the opinion of the High-Level Group of Scientific Advisors, 'Food from the Oceans';

67. Believes that the Commission should consult with the European Technology and Innovation Platform (EATiP) and the Aquaculture Advisory Council on priority subjects for inclusion in the national strategic plans;

68. Urges that investments be made in research, studies and pilot projects on aquaculture practices based on the ecosystem, in particular for outermost regions and those with demographic handicaps;

69. Points out that cooperation between the scientific community on the one hand, and aquaculture producers and other stakeholders upstream and downstream of producers on the other, should be strengthened;

70. Asks that, on the basis of the best scientific recommendations, standard protocols be established at EU level for the collection of data with a view to monitoring and improving aquaculture management and production practices and the social, health, economic and environmental impact of such practices, for both marine and freshwater fish farms;

71. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote innovative and environmentally friendly technologies in aquaculture, such as aquaponics, in order to produce food in a sustainable and resource-efficient way and to avoid negative impacts on the environment;

72. Calls on the Commission to encourage the exploring of opportunities to further develop seaweed aquaculture, a sector with ecological and economic value, with due regard for social and environmental sustainability;

Encouraging training and employment

73. Calls on the Member States, wherever beneficial with support from the Commission, to guarantee appropriate vocational training in the field of aquaculture and takes note of the possibility of retraining professional fishermen in alternative methods of managing aquatic environments, thus also helping to create jobs for women and young people in rural and coastal areas and in the outermost regions, on islands, and, in general, in regions that depend to a great extent on fisheries and aquaculture activities;

Increasing the sustainability of the EU's aquaculture sector

74. Highlights the important role of women in the aquaculture sector and the need to adapt the legislation to this reality, and the need to give due consideration to the other activities attached to aquaculture itself, such as those developed, among other things, by fishing net weavers or packers;

75. Notes that innovative systems aimed at breeding fish as closely as possible in keeping with the ecosystem and using natural feed have not so far had a sufficient presence on the European market; calls for the framework conditions for such systems to be improved;

76. Believes that investments are necessary in order to use the potential and ensure the sustainability of the aquaculture sector, for protection of the environment and for the delivery of public goods, and calls therefore for an increase in funding for research, innovation and quality-orientated, sustainable production projects; calls on the Commission and the Member States to further simplify and reduce the bureaucratic burden on the aquaculture sector, including pond farmers;

77. Underlines that encouraging cooperation between aquaculture sector research and innovation and specific University programmes will bring new ideas and boost the interest in this economic sector;

Ensuring adequate financing through the EMFF and further structural funds

78. Welcomes the promotion of sustainable and competitive aquaculture as one of the priorities of the EMFF; expresses its concern, however, that, according to the conclusions of the study published in 2014 by the European Court of Auditors, its predecessor, the European Fisheries Fund (EFF), did not support the sustainable development of aquaculture effectively; notes that at European level the support measures were considered to have been poorly designed and supervised and to have failed to provide a sufficiently clear framework for aquaculture development; further notes that at national level the support measures had not been designed or applied correctly and the national strategic plans and their operational programmes had not provided a sufficiently clear basis for promoting aquaculture, and that the situation has not really been improved by EMFF support;

79. Points out that education and good communication will attract young people into this sector, ensure its future and its competitiveness, and bring new technology and innovation into its development;

80. Calls on the Commission, Parliament and the Council to increase the support intensity of investment support for freshwater aquaculture to 75 % in the post-2020 fisheries

policy in order to boost the desire to invest and to provide much-needed help to fish farmers; calls in addition on the Commission to draw up, together with the European Investment Bank, an EU-level interest-rate support scheme for investing in aquaculture and financing liquid assets;

81. Proposes also increasing EU support in the future for Research Development Innovation linked to aquaculture, with particular regard to areas affecting economic sustainability and international competitiveness such as energy- and resource-efficiency, the development of biological materials funding, reducing the burden on the environment, providing higher-level environmental services, etc.

82. Notes that, as a result of the delay in adopting the EMFF Regulation and approving Member States' operational programmes, operators were not actually able to start using EMFF funds until late 2016 at best, a delay of almost three years;

83. Calls for simplification as regards the procedure and documents that have to be submitted in order to obtain funding from the EMFF;

84. Calls for all schemes that would prevent the promotion of aquaculture, including through other EU financial instruments (such as the ERDF), to be reviewed in a subsidy-oriented manner;

85. Calls on the Commission to make further efforts and provide the additional help necessary to enable users of the EMFF to gain access to funding;

86. Stresses that stronger support is needed for producer and inter-branch organisations so that they can become pillars of the CMO;

Harmonious symbiosis with fisheries

87. Points out that no antagonism should exist between fisheries and aquaculture and that both sectors can be perfectly compatible and complementary, especially in coastal regions or islands which are highly dependent on those activities and in which artisanal fishing is practised; calls, therefore for offshore aquaculture installations to be further developed;

88. Stresses that marine aquaculture is compatible and complementary with coastal fishing in the outermost regions, and calls on the Commission to support the development of farming and varietal-selection techniques in the warm waters of tropical or subtropical areas; calls on the Commission to highlight the role played by women in non-industrial coastal fishing and all associated activities;

89. Calls on the Commission to allocate more financing to environmentally responsible aquaculture production methods such as closed-containment aquaculture systems in the sea (CCS) and land-based recirculation systems (RASs) in order to reduce the negative impact of aquaculture on habitats, wild fish populations and water quality;

90. Reiterates the views it has already expressed in its resolution on the adoption of a European Cormorant Management Plan, and points out that reducing the harm caused by cormorants and other birds of prey to aquaculture farms is a major factor in

production costs, and thus for their survival and competitiveness; calls on the Member States to apply the current exceptions in the case of herons and cormorants and to the Commission to review the state of conservation of the otter;

91. Calls on the Commission, together with the Member States, to take action to drastically reduce cormorant stocks using all methods so that, on the one hand, the survival of cormorant stocks is secured and, on the other hand, no threat to other species is created and damage to the aquacultures concerned is averted;

92. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

GENERAL BACKGROUND

In Europe, aquaculture accounts for about 20% of fish production and directly employs some 85 000 people. The sector is mainly composed of SMEs or micro-enterprises in coastal and rural areas. European aquaculture provides high quality products, with high sustainability and consumer protection standards. The EU overall output has been more or less constant in volume since 2000, whereas global production, at the same time, has been growing by nearly 7% per year. From 2009 to 2013, production fell by about 100,000 tons. In a background of economic crisis and growing competition from third countries, during the last 10 years the volume of aquaculture production in the European Union has suffered a recession. This has also led to structural changes within the sector, principally consolidation and mergers of small companies, leading to a prevalence of large companies in the fish mariculture sector and few new investors. Nonetheless, in number, EU aquaculture is predominantly composed of micro-enterprises.

Yet, 'Blue Growth', a long term strategy to support sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors, places aquaculture among the sectors that have a high potential for sustainable jobs and growth, next to coastal tourism, marine biotechnology, ocean energy and seabed mining. And - the most important - aquaculture has a fundamental role to play in our society: it 'should contribute to the preservation of the food production potential on a sustainable basis throughout the Union so as to guarantee long-term food security, including food supplies, as well as growth and employment for Union citizens, and to contribute to meeting the growing world demand for aquatic food' (recital 53 of the basic Common Fisheries Policy Regulation).

However, despite the good intentions at EU level, namely reflected in the CFP Basic regulation, as well as in the relevant European Commission Communications - in 2009 aiming at giving 'a new impetus' and 'building a sustainable future for aquaculture' and in 2013 proposing 'Strategic Guidelines', actions at national / regional / local level - these were not a match for the sector's expectations and the initial enthusiasm was quickly transformed to deception and defeatism.

Administrative complexity and lack of transparency in licensing, refusal to grant licenses by local authorities, often with the pretext of non-conformity with environmental requirements, difficulty for access to space and water, probably complicated by societal demands (lack of adequate information to the consumer about aquaculture products and activities, the poor image of aquaculture, the disproportionate demand for further improvements in terms of environmental footprint or animal welfare), aggravated by external pressures (climate change, diseases), have annihilated the positive efforts of the EU institutions.

Consequently EU aquaculture was not able to take advantage of numerous opportunities, reflected by the global development in the sector, the increasing demand for fish products, the high level of environmental sustainability and the quality of EU products and the know-how and continuous search for innovation of EU aquaculture enterprises.

International cooperation and development actions, which look to develop aquaculture outside of the EU, are high on the agenda of many third countries, where European expertise is searched for – notably in EU universities and research institutions, feed and equipment

manufacturers and consultancy companies. The majority of EU aquaculture producers have been looking to survive rather than invest elsewhere to increase production and often mistrust such policies.

Also, the EU financial support allocated to aquaculture for the period 2007-2013 was criticized by the European Court of Auditors: ‘measures to support aquaculture in the period up to 2013 were not well designed and implemented at EU and Member State level, and (...) the European Fisheries Fund (EFF), as the funding instrument of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), failed to deliver value for money and effective support for the sustainable development of aquaculture.’

The new CFP aims, among others, to give new impetus to EU aquaculture. The Commission projection for EU farmed fish and shellfish production in 2020, based on its summary of national strategic plans for aquaculture, would represent an increase in volume of about 25 % by then – up to 1.5 million tonnes a year. Promotion of sustainable aquaculture activities would also benefit from some €1.2 billion of support under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) by the end of the financing period. However, the programming process and the start of effective use of available EMFF support has suffered from delays. Also, the establishment of the Aquaculture Advisory Council took over two years before it becomes operational, and it is only recently that started elaborating recommendations. The issuing of new Commission guidance documents on environmental directives in relation to aquaculture was also finalised two years later than announced in the 2013 Communication.

A mid-term evaluation of the Open Method of Coordination for EU aquaculture, notably for improving licensing procedures and allocation of space to aquaculture was launched at the beginning of 2018. Member States were invited to report (on a voluntary basis) progress made with regard to their national strategic plans for aquaculture. These reports will be taken into account together with analysis and case studies to assess the effectiveness of the current approach to reducing the barriers and driving growth in the sector. The evaluation will be complete by mid-2019.

POSITION OF THE RAPPORTEUR

The rapporteur believes that to obtain a growing, vibrant, sustainable and innovative EU aquaculture sector, overcoming the obstacles described remains paramount, where establishing a level playing field within the EU and with non-EU competitors is the basic concern.

The EU should take advantage of its know-how, expertise and its values – maintaining these while exporting them to third countries which wish to access the EU seafood market.

The European Commission Strategy for the Sustainable Development of European Aquaculture adopted in 2009, as well as the Strategic Guidelines proposed in 2013 remain relevant today and are still a challenge: simplify administrative procedures; securing sustainable development and growth of aquaculture through coordinated spatial planning; enhancing the competitiveness of EU aquaculture; promoting a level playing field for EU operators by exploiting their competitive advantages.

In this context, the rapporteur is of the view that without reduced bureaucracy, improved transparency and effective planning, better coordination at EU and national level, national

strategic plans that share the objectives set at EU level and fulfil the requirements of the CFP basic regulation, a holistic approach to spatial planning and due consideration to aquaculture next to well established and 'powerful' sectors, proper involvement of stakeholders namely through the strengthening of the Aquaculture Advisory Council, stricter EU legislation on imports of aquaculture products and better controls in the borders, better communication to the consumer and proper labelling throughout the whole chain from the production to the plate, a 'common market' for vaccines, there cannot be business certainty and sustainable development of the EU aquaculture sector.

The recent report of the High Level Group of Scientific Advisors of the Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM), 'Food from the Oceans - How can more food and biomass be obtained from the oceans in a way that does not deprive future generations of their benefits?', affirms that 'the greatest and most feasible potential identified for expansion globally lies in mariculture'.

Among its recommendations are the following: 'Mainstream a 'food from the ocean' paradigm of responsible culture (...) into broad EU and global systems-level policy agendas'; 'Take the development of mariculture in Europe to a higher and more strategic level via a comprehensive, concerted policy framework – this includes issuing guidance on the inclusion of mariculture requirements in the implementation of the 2014 EU Directive on Marine Spatial Planning and extending technological cooperation to mariculture under sustainable fisheries partnership agreements (SFPAs) between the EU and southern partner countries.'

The rapporteur cannot agree more with all the above. The problems have been identified, the diagnosis is good and the solutions proposed so far are very relevant. What is needed is political impetus. And, within a context of mutual respect of each one's role - EU Institutions and Member States' local and regional administrations - the necessary dose of subsidiarity to the management of EU aquaculture has to be mixed with reinforced action at EU level, by setting EU-wide objectives, while opting for regionalised targets adapted to the specificities of each aquaculture branch at local / regional level. As, the principle of subsidiarity aims to ensure that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen, but without excluding action at EU level, when it is justified in light of the possibilities available at national, regional or local level.

The SAM report continues in the same line: 'From a policy vantage point, subsidiarity must be respected (...). Notwithstanding this, there is scope and value in deploying stronger and proportionate effort at EU level to support a level playing field and increased attention to mariculture along with other aspects of Food from the Ocean - akin to agricultural policy or a broader food policy.' 'The policy framework (...) should capitalize on the substantial efforts which have already been deployed (such as the on-going implementation of the 2013 EU aquaculture strategic guidelines), taking them to a higher strategic priority level.'

There are upcoming opportunities and appointments that we should not miss in order to give to EU aquaculture the place it deserves: the European Commission will deliver, by the end of 2018, an assessment of the situation with regard to licensing requirements and allocation of space to aquaculture, based on the Member States' reports on progress made with regard to their national strategic plans for aquaculture. By 2021 Member States will have to adopt national maritime spatial plans, as foreseen in the EU Directive establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning. Also the future CFP should include measures and the necessary

financial means to accompany the sustainable development of a thriving EU aquaculture sector.

MINORITY OPINION

Towards a sustainable and competitive European aquaculture sector: current status and future challenges (2017/2118(INI))
Committee on Fisheries, Rapporteur: Carlos Iturgaiz

Minority Opinion tabled by Gabriel Mato

The fish consumption on the planet has just exceeded the average threshold of 20 kg per year per capita, which is twice the average level of consumption in the 1960s. Aquaculture at global scale must have a growing future if we are going to feed 2.5 billion more people by the end of this century, especially, if people eat twice as much fish now than in the past. As the natural productivity of the oceans and fresh water is limited. And it has all the potential to do it. Therefore, aquaculture plays a fundamental role in our society: it feeds population with rich nutritionally food and it is a necessary complement to fish that provides the extractive fishing sector.

Aquaculture is to water what agriculture is to land: it's all about farming. Yet, there is a tendency to view food security and nutrition issues largely through the lens of agriculture, with aquaculture often treated marginally.

The EU sector provides to the consumer high quality, sustainable products and we can only be proud of our European producers. Its social, environmental and animal welfare standards are one of the highest in the world. Yet unsustainable low-cost products from third countries inundate our EU market and create an unfair competition with our EU producers that sell at the same market.

Also, mussels and in general shellfish farming offer valuable environmental services, as they filter and clean the sea.

For all the above reasons, we need to boost the development of this sustainable activity.

MINORITY OPINION

Towards a sustainable and competitive European aquaculture sector: current status and future challenges (2017/2118(INI))
Committee on Fisheries, Rapporteur: Carlos Iturgaiz

Minority Opinion tabled by Maria Lidia Senra Rodríguez

Aquaculture is not a solution to overfishing nor is it necessary to introduce industrial baitfish into the sea for the supply of the proteins necessary for a good diet.

The fundamental objective of our actions in fisheries should be to maintain marine ecosystems and local populations, avoiding the displacement and destruction of artisanal and small-scale fisheries, as well as the agricultural land affected in the marine environments where this industry is located.
Intensive fish farms generate large amounts of fecal matter, feed residues and medicines (antibiotics, among others) that pollute the waters with a strong negative impact on fluvial, marine and health ecosystems. In addition, the local species in the environments of these farms are affected by the diseases originated in them.

Based on the precautionary principle and the negative impacts that the industrial baitfish will cause (destruction of employment in coastal areas and incompatibility with healthy, safe and sustainable food), we emphasize that the installation of these should not be promoted or allowed fish farms in the Union, whose consequences and effects on ecosystems will be totally uncontrollable

21.3.2018

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

for the Committee on Fisheries

Towards a sustainable and competitive European aquaculture sector: current status and future challenges
(2017/2118(INI))

Rapporteur: Francesc Gambús

SHORT JUSTIFICATION

In April 2013 the European Commission published the Strategic Guidelines for the Sustainable Development of EU Aquaculture[20] which includes a draft outline for the multiannual national plans. In May 2016 the Commission published its summary of the 27 Multiannual National Aquaculture Plans, which analyses the main objectives and challenges of the aquaculture sector identified by 27 Member States in their plans within the overall context of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

The EU accounts for less than 2% of the volume of fish farmed worldwide, but is a world leader in terms of quality and sustainability. The rapporteur is of the opinion that the EU can and should remain world leader in those terms, but still the production needs to be increased in order to cover the EUs demand for fish to a higher degree. Currently, the EUs demand for fish is only met by EU aquaculture (10%), the rest comes from EU fisheries (30%) and 60% is imported from third countries. The rapporteur believes that it is possible to increase the EU aquaculture without lowering standards and by keeping quality and sustainability. In order to use the enormous potential of the aquaculture sector, the complexity of administration, such as for licenses, authorizations and environmental analysis (i.e. impact or monitoring studies) should be lowered and put into relation to the request to have certainty for investments in this sector and to give the EU market a chance to be more competitive. Investments, whether in research, men power, new farms or other areas in the aquaculture sector, the EU would keep influence on production standards instead of losing the market to third countries with lower standards. Furthermore, as the sector is almost entirely composed of micro enterprises, this would safe, guarantee and increase jobs.

[20] COM(2013)0229.

The rapporteur is therefore of the opinion, that the EU needs to take the chance now to develop its potential in this area as a role model not only in terms of quality and sustainability but also with regard to the environment and food safety.

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety calls on the Committee on Fisheries, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Stresses the legal commitments of the EU to ensure nature protection, including through the Birds Directive, the Habitats Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive;

2. Believes that the EU needs to increase its production in the EU aquaculture sector, as well as to maintain and enhance jobs and structures, while taking quality, sustainability, food safety, animal and human health, and environmental aspects and the pressure on natural fishing grounds into account; believes further that the EU should be a world role model in this regard; points out that, in Europe, aquaculture (the farming of finfish, shellfish and aquatic plants) produces nearly 20 % of fish products and currently directly employs some 85 000 people;

3. Believes that stronger measures are needed to make aquaculture a more efficient, economically viable, socially responsible and environmentally friendly sector that meets a greater share of the European demand for fish and reduces Europe’s dependence on imports;

4. Stresses that European aquaculture must not lead to further overfishing and that proper safeguards must be established to ensure that growth in aquaculture does not jeopardise the maximum sustainable yield objectives of the common fisheries policy;

5. Acknowledges the socio-economic importance of aquaculture for coastal communities and islands;

6. Notes that worldwide fish consumption has grown by one third in the last 20 years, and that population growth will increase pressure to fish more and more;

7. Notes that aquaculture can only meet the increase in demand for fish if it does not remove more fish from the oceans than it produces;

8. Calls on the Commission to introduce safeguards to ensure that both fish-based and non-fish-based feed are sustainably sourced;

9. Stresses the importance of guidance regarding the location of new sites for aquaculture; notes the importance of maritime spatial planning, in which the needs applicable to different uses must be taken into account, such as energy, maritime transport, fisheries and aquaculture, tourism, recreation and the conservation, protection and improvement of nature and the environment, and efforts must be made to reconcile them;

10. Reiterates that a reduction in nutrient loads is a prerequisite for aquaculture; stresses the importance of cooperation between researchers, the aquaculture industry, feed producers, environmental administrators and environmental organisations;

11. Is convinced that the use of different international experience of well-planned aqua farms integrated into local economies and the promotion of European environmental

best practices, in particular as regards sustainable waste management, safeguarding and making the most of local biodiversity, and choice of sustainable eating habits, would strengthen aquaculture and would help all Member States to increase sustainable aquaculture production; points out that best practice examples in other regions have been developed under different political and geographical conditions that are not necessarily comparable with the various conditions across the Member States;

12. Stresses that freshwater aquaculture is still an insufficiently explored opportunity for improving food security and developing rural areas;

13. Stresses that freshwater aquaculture not only plays an important social role by providing rural employment in the poorest areas, but also plays an environmental role in maintaining valuable wetlands and providing a wide range of ecosystem services which go far beyond its economic value;

14. Believes that the way to a sustainable and competitive European aquaculture sector is through independent scientific assessment to determine the carrying capacity of the environment, in particular in open marine farming, which is the main precondition for allocation of space and the provision of licences or permits and for ensuring coherence with environmental legislation;

15. Welcomes the examples of good cooperation on the basis of voluntary agreements and other agreements between conservationists and the sector; welcomes the positive examples of contributions by aquaculture to the maintenance of good water quality and aquatic ecosystem services, while acknowledging and seeking to reduce the negative impacts aquaculture can have on the local environment and water quality; therefore encourages further innovation and initiatives to ensure a long-term sustainable and profitable sector;

16. Considers that the phenomenon of contamination between wild and farmed fish needs to be combated, as it dangerously impoverishes the marine gene pool and poses a potential threat to the ecosystem;

17. Calls on Member States to develop and apply maps of protected species and habitats to aquaculture prior to determining aquaculture zones in order to implement an ecosystem-based approach to spatial planning;

18. Calls on Member States to establish standardised protocols to collect data on the measurable environmental impacts, sanitary and veterinary conditions and food safety of aquaculture so as to ensure that sound and independent scientific evidence is used to monitor and manage production practices; calls on the Commission to establish long-term scientific monitoring that also extends beyond the duration of a specific project; underlines the importance of follow-ups on projects and studies and of close cooperation between scientists with the aquaculture sector, including pond farmers;

19. Considers that the non-proper use of chemicals and antibiotics in aquaculture poses risks to ecosystems around aquaculture installations and to human health; draws attention to the Commission Communication of 29 June 2017 to the Council and the European Parliament on a European ‘One Health’ Action Plan against antimicrobial

resistance (AMR)[21];

20. Stresses that the European One Health Action Plan against Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) observes that immunisation through vaccination is a cost-effective public health intervention in efforts to combat antimicrobial resistance***[22]***, which likewise applies to aquaculture;

21. Observes that the relatively higher costs of diagnosis, antimicrobial alternatives and vaccination in comparison with widely used antibiotics are regrettably an obstacle to achieving greater use and a higher rate of vaccination, as aspired to by the Action Plan***[23]***; welcomes the fact that in the Action Plan the Commission announces incentives to increase the uptake of diagnostics, antimicrobial alternatives and vaccines***[24]***;

22. Stresses the importance of the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1143/2014 on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species (IAS) in order to protect both the aquaculture sector and native species and ecosystems;

23. Calls on the Commission in cooperation with the Member States to launch an EU-wide information campaign for consumers and businesses on aquaculture in general and in particular the differences between the stringent and comprehensive standards on the European market and the standards applicable to imported products in third countries, with particular emphasis on the problems caused for food safety and public health by the introduction into the Union of particularly resistant micro-organisms and antimicrobial resistance (AMR);

24. Urges the Commission to ensure that assessments of new river basin management plans take into account the specific needs as regards flow rates and nutrients of aquaculture facilities located along rivers and particularly, given their vulnerability, of facilities located in transitional waters;

25. Underlines the importance of the support available from the European Fisheries Fund to ensure the sustainable use of fishery resources and to promote environmental protection and conservation of aquatic resources;

26. Believes that investments are necessary in order to use the potential and ensure the sustainability of the aquaculture sector, for protection of the environment and for the delivery of public goods, and calls therefore for an increase in funding for research, innovation and quality-orientated, sustainable production projects; calls on the Commission and the Member States to further simplify and reduce the bureaucratic burden on the aquaculture sector, including pond farmers;

27. Believes that the Commission and Member States should devise practical incentives and measures, including improved implementation of or, if required, amendments to, Directive 2006/88/EC, to increase the use of vaccines in aquaculture and thereby to prevent, control and eradicate diseases and antibiotic resistance in aquatic animals cost-

[21] European Commission, A European One Health Action Plan against Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), 29 June 2017, COM(2017)0339.
[22] Ibid., p. 10.
[23] Ibid., p. 15.
[24] Ibid., p. 12.

effectively and to maximise the survival, growth and production efficiency of aquatic animals;

28. Calls on the Commission and Member States to invest in research, studies and pilot projects for innovative, future-oriented, environmentally responsible aquaculture practices, including Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture Systems (IMTA), Aquaponics, and Recirculation Aquaculture Systems (RAS), that reduce the impact of aquaculture farms on habitats, wild animal populations and water quality, thus contributing to an ecosystem-based approach;

29. Calls on the Commission to make a distinction between industrial aquaculture and small-scale family-owned companies in the tendering of grants and projects, given the different starting positions, development opportunities and goals;

30. Regrets that over half of all aquaculture products consumed in the EU are imported; recognises the positive impact aquaculture can have on local economies within the EU by way of supporting more local food production and consumption;

31. Takes positive note of new initiatives concerning land-based aquaculture, especially in EU areas with closed waters;

32. Recognises that aquaculture installations can cause significant disruption to habitats, including to marine birds; calls for mandatory spatial sensitivity mapping and SEAs for all regional and national aquaculture plans in order to identify potential zones for aquaculture that do not conflict with EU environmental legislation;

33. Acknowledges the potential of aquaculture in urban areas, especially in relation to aquaponics;

34. Notes that, following the recast of the Data Collection Regulation, all marine fish farms are obliged to collect data, whereas freshwater farms can do so on a voluntary basis; calls for the standardisation of protocols in this respect.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	20.3.2018
Result of final vote	+: 61 –: 1 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Marco Affronte, Margrete Auken, Pilar Ayuso, Ivo Belet, Biljana Borzan, Paul Brannen, Soledad Cabezón Ruiz, Nessa Childers, Birgit Collin-Langen, Miriam Dalli, Seb Dance, Angélique Delahaye, Mark Demesmaeker, Stefan Eck, Bas Eickhout, Karl-Heinz Florenz, Francesc Gambús, Elisabetta Gardini, Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy, Arne Gericke, Jens Gieseke, Julie Girling, Sylvie Goddyn, Françoise Grossetête, Andrzej Grzyb, Jytte Guteland, Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Karin Kadenbach, Kateřina Konečná, Urszula Krupa, Giovanni La Via, Jo Leinen, Peter Liese, Lukas Mandl, Valentinas Mazuronis, Susanne Melior, Rory Palmer, Massimo Paolucci, Piernicola Pedicini, Bolesław G. Piecha, Pavel Poc, Julia Reid, Frédérique Ries, Michèle Rivasi, Daciana Octavia Sârbu, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Davor Škrlec, Renate Sommer, Claudiu Ciprian Tănăsescu, Ivica Tolić, Adina-Ioana Vălean, Jadwiga Wiśniewska, Damiano Zoffoli
Substitutes present for the final vote	Christofer Fjellner, Elena Gentile, Merja Kyllönen, Norbert Lins, Gesine Meissner, Ulrike Müller, Mihai Ţurcanu
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Fernando Ruas, Ruža Tomašić

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

61	+
ALDE	Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy, Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Valentinas Mazuronis, Gesine Meissner, Ulrike Müller, Frédérique Ries
ECR	Mark Demesmaeker, Arne Gericke, Urszula Krupa, Bolesław G. Piecha, Ruža Tomašić, Jadwiga Wiśniewska
EFDD	Piernicola Pedicini
ENF	Sylvie Goddyn
GUE/NGL	Stefan Eck, Kateřina Konečná, Merja Kyllönen
PPE	Pilar Ayuso, Ivo Belet, Birgit Collin-Langen, Angélique Delahaye, Christofer Fjellner, Karl-Heinz Florenz, Francesc Gambús, Elisabetta Gardini, Jens Gieseke, Julie Girling, Françoise Grossetête, Andrzej Grzyb, Giovanni La Via, Peter Liese, Norbert Lins, Lukas Mandl, Fernando Ruas, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Renate Sommer, Ivica Tolić, Mihai Ţurcanu, Adina-Ioana Vălean
S&D	Biljana Borzan, Paul Brannen, Soledad Cabezón Ruiz, Nessa Childers, Miriam Dalli, Seb Dance, Elena Gentile, Jytte Guteland, Karin Kadenbach, Jo Leinen, Susanne Melior, Rory Palmer, Massimo Paolucci, Pavel Poc, Daciana Octavia Sârbu, Claudiu Ciprian Tănăsescu, Damiano Zoffoli
VERTS/ALE	Marco Affronte, Margrete Auken, Bas Eickhout, Michèle Rivasi, Davor Škrlec

1	-
EFDD	Julia Reid

0	0

Key to symbols:
+ : in favour
- : against
0 : abstention

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Date adopted	15.5.2018
Result of final vote	+: 21 –: 2 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Renata Briano, Alain Cadec, David Coburn, Linnéa Engström, João Ferreira, Sylvie Goddyn, Carlos Iturgaiz, António Marinho e Pinto, Gabriel Mato, Norica Nicolai, Liadh Ní Riada, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Ricardo Serrão Santos, Ruža Tomašić, Peter van Dalen, Jarosław Wałęsa
Substitutes present for the final vote	Norbert Erdős, Yannick Jadot, Verónica Lope Fontagné, Maria Lidia Senra Rodríguez
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Tim Aker, Nessa Childers

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

21	+
ALDE	António Marinho e Pinto, Norica Nicolai
ECR	Peter van Dalen, Ruža Tomašić
ENF	Sylvie Goddyn
GUE/NGL	João Ferreira, Liadh Ní Riada
PPE	Alain Cadec, Norbert Erdős, Carlos Iturgaiz, Verónica Lope Fontagné, Gabriel Mato, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Jarosław Wałęsa
S&D	Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Renata Briano, Nessa Childers, Ulrike Rodust, Ricardo Serrão Santos
VERTS/ALE	Marco Affronte, Linnéa Engström

2	-
EFDD	Tim Aker, David Coburn

0	0

Key to symbols:
+ : in favour
- : against
0 : abstention