



2017/2118(INI)

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 Aquaculture¹ 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.

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.

¹ COM(2013)0229.

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)¹;

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 resistance², 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 Plan³; welcomes the fact that in the Action Plan the Commission announces incentives to increase the uptake of diagnostics, antimicrobial alternatives and vaccines⁴;
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

¹ European Commission, A European One Health Action Plan against Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), 29 June 2017, COM(2017)0339.

² Ibid., p. 10.

³ Ibid., p. 15.

⁴ Ibid., p. 12.

prevent, control and eradicate diseases and antibiotic resistance in aquatic animals cost-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 Țurcanu
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, Boleslaw 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 Țurcanu, 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