



AQUACULTURE PRODUCTION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Aquaculture production in the European Union remains relatively stagnant compared with the rising rates of farmed seafood production at world level. Over the past 20 years, the Commission has attempted to gear up EU production potential through the launch of various strategy and guideline papers, and the aquaculture advisory council (AAC) was established in 2016. This body is made up of representatives of the industry and other relevant stakeholder organisations and gives advice to the European institutions and the Member States.

BACKGROUND

Whereas there was a fourfold increase in aquaculture production globally between 1990 and 2017, the aggregated production of farmed seafood in all EU Member States remained stable for a long time at around 1.2 million tonnes. EU production figures have, however, increased recently by around 24%, with the value of European aquaculture production in 2017 reaching EUR 5.6 billion. 76% of this figure came from fish products and 24% from crustaceans and molluscs. EU aquaculture producers have primarily focused on four species – mussels (35% of total volume), salmon (15%), trout (14%) and oysters (7%) – with other important farmed species in the EU being sea bream, carp, sea bass and clams.

The main aquaculture producers among the EU Member States in 2017 were Spain (21%), France (15%), the United Kingdom (14%), Italy (14%) and Greece (10%), which together accounted for around 74% of total aquaculture production. However, in terms of the value of production, the UK was the leading producer (21%), followed by France (16%), Spain (13%), Greece (12%) and Italy (11%). Bivalve molluscs (mussels, oysters and clams) are dominant in Spain, France and Italy. The UK produced mainly salmon, while Greece produced mainly sea bass and sea bream.

A STRATEGY FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF EUROPEAN AQUACULTURE

As a first attempt to tackle the stagnation of aquaculture production in the EU, the Commission published, in 2002, a communication ([COM\(2002\)0511](#)) entitled 'A strategy for the sustainable development of European aquaculture'. The objectives of this strategy were:

- Creating long-term secure employment, particularly in fisheries-dependent areas, and increasing employment in aquaculture by between 8 000 and 10 000 full-time job equivalents over the 2003-2008 period;



- Ensuring the availability to consumers of products that are healthy, safe and of good quality, as well as promoting high animal health and welfare standards;
- Ensuring an environmentally sound industry.

However, the strategy did not achieve its objectives, particularly as regards increasing production and employment: neither the target of a 4% growth rate nor that of 8 000 to 10 000 new jobs was achieved.

The main problem for the aquaculture sector has been the lack of production growth, in contrast to the high growth rate observed on a global scale. The sector has, however, seen good progress in areas such as ensuring availability of quality products to the consumer and ensuring environmental sustainability.

In addition to the traditional obstacles and constraints, European aquaculture has met with increased competition from production in third countries since 2002, and has had to face crises of governance and the effects of the economic crisis after 2007.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR AQUACULTURE — A NEW IMPETUS FOR THE STRATEGY FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF EUROPEAN AQUACULTURE

Seven years later, on 8 April 2009, the Commission published its second communication ([COM\(2009\)0162](#)) on aquaculture, seeking to identify and address the causes of the stagnation of EU aquaculture production. This new communication was entitled 'Building a sustainable future for aquaculture: A new impetus for the Strategy for the Sustainable Development of European Aquaculture'. It aimed to ensure that the EU remains a key player in a strategic sector, increasing production and employment by implementing the following actions:

- A.** Promoting the competitiveness of EU aquaculture production through:
 - Research and technological development;
 - Promoting spatial planning for aquaculture in order to tackle the problem of competition over space;
 - Enabling the aquaculture business to cope with market demands;
 - Promoting aquaculture development in its international dimension;
- B.** Establishing conditions for sustainable growth of aquaculture through:
 - Ensuring compatibility between aquaculture and the environment;
 - Shaping a high-performance aquatic animal farming industry;
 - Ensuring consumer health protection and recognising the health benefits of aquatic food products;
- C.** Improving the sector's image and governance through:
 - Better implementation of EU legislation;
 - Reducing the administrative burden;



- Ensuring proper stakeholder participation and the provision of appropriate information to the public;
- Ensuring adequate monitoring of the aquaculture sector.

STRATEGIC GUIDELINES FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF EU AQUACULTURE

Ultimately, the strategic guidelines ([COM\(2013\)0229](#)) published by the Commission on 29 April 2013 aimed to assist the Member States in defining their own national targets, taking account of their relative starting positions, national circumstances and institutional arrangements. These guidelines addressed four priority areas:

- Simplifying administrative procedures and reducing licensing time for aquaculture farms;
- Coordinated spatial planning to overcome the hindering effect of the lack of space;
- Enhancing the competitiveness of EU aquaculture;
- Promoting a level playing field.

MULTIANNUAL NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLANS

As established through Article 34 of the CFP basic regulation (Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013^[1]), Member States were to submit [multiannual national strategic plans](#) (MANPs) for the development of aquaculture activities on their territory for the 2014-2020 period. The Commission encouraged the exchange of information and best practices among Member States through different workshops and meetings. As a follow-up, it facilitated the coordination of the national measures envisaged in the multiannual national strategic plans. Member States carried out a mid-term assessment of the implementation of their MANPs at the end of 2017. The final assessment reports are expected from national governments at the beginning of 2021.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Parliament has adopted numerous resolutions aimed at further strengthening the EU's aquaculture sector:

- Resolution of 16 January 2003 on aquaculture in the European Union: present and future^[2];
- Legislative resolution of 27 April 2006 on the proposal for a Council directive on animal health requirements for aquaculture animals and products thereof, and on the prevention and control of certain diseases in aquatic animals^[3];
- Legislative resolution of 14 November 2006 on the proposal for a Council regulation concerning use of alien and locally absent species in aquaculture^[4];

[1] [OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22.](#)

[2] [OJ C 38 E, 12.2.2004, p. 318.](#)

[3] [OJ C 296 E, 6.12.2006, p. 106.](#)

[4] [OJ C 314 E, 21.12.2006, p. 73.](#)



- Legislative resolution of 14 November 2006 on the proposal for a Council regulation amending Council Regulation (EC) No 104/2000 on the common organisation of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products^[5];
- 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^[6];
- Resolution of 17 June 2010 on a new impetus for the Strategy for the Sustainable Development of European Aquaculture^[7];
- 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^[8];
- Legislative resolution of 23 November 2010 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 708/2007 concerning the use of alien and locally absent species in aquaculture^[9];
- Legislative resolution of 12 September 2012 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the common organisation of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products^[10];
- Legislative resolution of 10 December 2013 on the Council position at first reading with a view to the adoption of a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the common organisation of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1184/2006 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 104/2000^[11];
- Resolution of 8 September 2015 on untapping the potential of research and innovation in the blue economy to create jobs and growth^[12];
- Resolution of 12 May 2016 on traceability of fishery and aquaculture products in restaurants and retail^[13];
- Resolution of 12 June 2018 on towards a sustainable and competitive European aquaculture sector: current status and future challenges^[14].

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[5][OJ C 314 E, 21.12.2006, p. 76.](#)

[6][OJ C 21 E, 28.1.2010, p. 11.](#)

[7][OJ C 236 E, 12.8.2011, p. 132.](#)

[8][OJ C 351 E, 2.12.2011, p. 119.](#)

[9][OJ C 99 E, 3.4.2012, p. 177.](#)

[10][OJ C 353 E, 3.12.2013, p. 212.](#)

[11][OJ C 468, 15.12.2016, p. 237.](#)

[12][OJ C 316, 22.9.2017, p. 64.](#)

[13][OJ C 76, 28.2.2018, p. 40.](#)

[14][OJ C 28, 27.1.2020, p. 26.](#)

