



2023/2015(INI)

26.5.2023

OPINION

of the Committee on Fisheries

for the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

European protein strategy
(2023/2015(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: Nicolás González Casares

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Fisheries calls on the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas EU consumption of fish and shellfish in 2021 amounted to 10.41 million tonnes, while EU exports amounted to 2.56 million tonnes and EU imports to 6.15 million tonnes; whereas in 2020, domestic consumption of fish and seafood products declined by 6 % compared to 2019;
 - B. whereas since 2013, most of the world's fish and seafood has come from aquaculture; whereas according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), global aquaculture production amounted to 122.6 million tonnes in 2020, compared to 91.4 million tonnes of extractive fishing;
 - C. whereas 3.3 billion people in the world rely on fisheries and aquaculture products for up to 20 % of their animal protein intake, and whereas in some coastal states and small island developing states, these products contribute to half or more of total animal protein intake;
 - D. whereas the World Health Organization (WHO) considers that the unsaturated fat content of fish makes them a good source of protein and fat in a healthy diet;
 - E. whereas fisheries and aquaculture make an important contribution to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as SDG 2 'Zero hunger', SDG 3 'Good health and well-being', SDG 12 'Responsible consumption and production', SDG 13 'Climate action' and SDG 14 'Life below water';
- 1. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the upcoming European protein strategy recognises the strategic role of the sustainable fisheries and aquaculture sectors, and their professionals, as suppliers of aquatic protein of the highest quality with one of the lowest carbon footprints and thus their contribution towards and potential for creating economic development and new jobs; stresses that it is of vital importance that the Commission involve the sector and the various administrations responsible for fisheries and aquaculture in the development of its protein strategy;
 - 2. Stresses that fishery and aquaculture products, apart from having a lower carbon footprint than farmed meat products, also require lower levels of inputs, and have a relevant role to play in helping to build a sustainable food system; believes that the fishery and aquaculture sectors can represent real assets for both tackling the climate crisis and providing healthy food for a growing global population; points out the strategic value of aquatic foods in reaching the objectives of the European Green Deal and in contributing to the SDGw;
 - 3. Highlights the central role of fisheries and aquaculture in ensuring food security and in any nutritional strategy based on healthy and high-quality protein; considers it necessary, therefore, to strengthen the competitiveness of the European fisheries and

aquaculture sectors as suppliers of the highest quality foods with the best sustainability standards worldwide in order to reduce the EU's growing dependence on imports, including of fish oils and fishmeal, with the risks they may pose to food security, notably in some countries in Africa; considers it necessary, furthermore, to ensure food security and affordable food production;

4. Highlights that the EU is a net importer of fishery and aquaculture products, as almost 60 % of the total consumption in the EU is imported from non-EU countries; recalls that EU self-sufficiency values dropped to 38.9 % after the COVID-19 pandemic with an average of 43 % over the last 10 years; recalls that almost 30 % of the seafood imported is white fish sourced from non-EU countries with different production and sustainability standards; is of the opinion that the current imbalance is not acceptable owing to the excessive dependence on non-EU countries and the present economic and social impacts, especially at a time when the European seafood sector is facing major challenges such as those arising from Brexit, rising energy prices and competition for the use of maritime space; considers that high sustainability standards equal to those demanded of EU products should be demanded of protein products imported to the internal market to a situation whereby high sustainability standards in the EU sector leads to production being shifted abroad, undermining the sustainability efforts of and level playing for EU producers; calls on the Commission and the Member States to redouble their efforts to increase the sustainable domestic production of aquatic protein;
5. Highlights the efforts already made by the European fishing sector to improve the state of stocks at EU level; emphasises, in this regard, the need for continued efforts to fish sustainably and minimise the impact on marine ecosystems in order to guarantee healthy stocks and oceans, as this sector plays an essential role in ensuring European food security and autonomy; underlines that such efforts must be supported, as the fishing sector must not be left to bear the costs of the transition towards a more sustainable fishery sector alone; stresses the importance of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors for the EU's protein supply and, in particular, the important role of small-scale and artisanal fishers as well as shellfish gatherers, who make a valuable contribution to the EU's protein supply;
6. Emphasises that regular consumption of fisheries and aquaculture products is an essential component of a healthy diet and that, thanks to its heart-healthy properties, fish consumption has great potential to address diet-related diseases such as cardiovascular disease; expresses its concern, therefore, over the decline in fish consumption in the EU; calls on the Commission and the Member States to increase the role of fishery and aquaculture products, in particular from local producers, in their nutritional policies and programmes, taking into account the advice from the WHO regarding the consumption of aquatic food, in particular by promoting their consumption among specific groups, such as young people, and even by introducing or improving their consumption in schools and in programmes aimed at tackling specific nutritional deficiencies; recalls furthermore, that Directive 2006/112/EC¹ allows Member States to apply reduced VAT rates to supplies of foodstuffs and related services, and calls on Member States to make use of this possibility in relation to fish products, given the benefits of fish

¹ Council Directive 2006/112/EC of 28 November 2006 on the common system of value added tax. OJ L 347, 11.12.2006, p. 1.

consumption;

7. Stresses the importance of reducing discards as a means of avoiding food waste; reiterates, in this regard, the call from its resolution of 18 May 2021² for commercial and/or charitable opportunities to be identified to make the best possible use of those unavoidable or unwanted catches below the minimum conservation reference size, while favouring fishing techniques that avoid and reduce such catches, as far as possible; underlines, in this context, the need to prevent the creation or expansion of a seafood secondary market;
8. Considers that consumers are becoming more conscious of the food that they consume and how it has been produced; reiterates its call for more information to be made available to consumers on the environmental impact of different food products, including proteins, as well as information on their production, in order to contribute to a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system; welcomes the Commission's intention, expressed in the farm to fork strategy, to extend the requirement for mandatory origin or provenance indications to additional products;
9. Welcomes the Commission communication of 15 November 2022 entitled 'Towards a Strong and Sustainable EU Algae Sector' (COM(2022)0592); believes that the Commission should build the upcoming European protein strategy on initiatives such as that one; points out that algae and microalgae can represent an important complementary source of protein as part of a sustainable and secure global food production system and calls on the Commission to include this untapped potential in the European protein strategy;
10. Points out the potential of innovation and new businesses in terms of creating new fish feeds with a lower carbon footprint and less impact on biodiversity; stresses that further development and sustainable innovation in the field of plant protein production and complementary sources of protein in the EU, such as insects and algae, is a way of effectively addressing many of the environmental and climate challenges that the EU is facing; emphasises the need to invest in research and development with a view to further decoupling mariculture from extractive fishing to accelerate and increase the use of complementary proteins in fish feed, such as plant proteins, seafood processing by-products, microbial ingredients, algae and insects;
11. Stresses that EU aquaculture and mariculture can contribute much more than they currently do to sustainable food production and provide healthier, fairer and more sustainable protein that is less dependant on fish-based feed and that does not use feed derived from fishmeal and fish oil production using catches from illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing; highlights the need to improve aquatic animal welfare as higher welfare implies fewer diseases, less use of antibiotics and healthier ecosystems; welcomes the strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030 and points out the need to monitor and promote the implementation of the reforms set out in the multiannual strategic plans for the development of aquaculture, in order to boost sustainable production; reiterates its demands in relation to providing a robust, reliable, predictable, streamlined and

² [European Parliament resolution of 18 May 2021 on securing the objectives of the landing obligation under Article 15 of the Common Fisheries Policy, OJ C 15, 12.1.2022, p. 9.](#)

business-friendly legal framework that supports the development of sustainable aquaculture.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	24.5.2023
Result of final vote	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: flex-end; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">+:</div> <div>19</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: flex-end; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">-:</div> <div>2</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: flex-end; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">0:</div> <div>6</div> </div>
Members present for the final vote	Clara Aguilera, João Albuquerque, François-Xavier Bellamy, Isabel Carvalhais, Maria da Graça Carvalho, Asger Christensen, Rosa D'Amato, Francisco Guerreiro, Niclas Herbst, Jan Huitema, France Jamet, Predrag Fred Matić, Caroline Roose, Bert-Jan Ruissen, Marc Tarabella
Substitutes present for the final vote	Martin Hlaváček, Ska Keller, Gabriel Mato, Raffaele Stancanelli, Lucia Vuolo, Stéphanie Yon-Courtin
Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote	Pablo Arias Echeverría, Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou, Marco Campomenosi, Clare Daly, Gilles Lebreton, Mick Wallace

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

19	+
ID	France Jamet, Gilles Lebreton
NI	Marc Tarabella
PPE	Pablo Arias Echeverría, Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou, François-Xavier Bellamy, Maria da Graça Carvalho, Niclas Herbst, Gabriel Mato, Lucia Vuolo
Renew	Asger Christensen, Martin Hlaváček, Jan Huitema
S&D	Clara Aguilera, João Albuquerque, Isabel Carvalhais, Predrag Fred Matić
The Left	Clare Daly, Mick Wallace

2	-
ID	Marco Campomenosi
Renew	Stéphanie Yon-Courtin

6	0
ECR	Bert-Jan Ruissen, Raffaele Stancanelli
Vers/ALE	Rosa D'Amato, Francisco Guerreiro, Ska Keller, Caroline Roose

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention