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on a new impetus for the strategy for the sustainable development of European aquaculture
(2009/2107(INI))

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on a new impetus for the strategy for the sustainable development of European aquaculture (2009/2107(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘Building a sustainable future for aquaculture - A new impetus for the Strategy for the Sustainable Development of European Aquaculture’ (COM(2009)0162),
- 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 production¹,
- having regard to the proposal for a Council regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 708/2007 concerning use of alien and locally absent species in aquaculture (COM(2009)0541),
- having regard to Commission Regulation (EC) No 257/2009 of 24 March 2009 amending Regulation (EC) No 794/2004 as regards the supplementary information sheet for notification of aid to fisheries and aquaculture²,
- having regard to Commission Regulation (EC) No 248/2009 of 19 March 2009 laying down detailed rules for the application of Council Regulation (EC) No 104/2000 as regards notifications concerning recognition of producer organisations, the fixing of prices and intervention within the scope of the common organisation of the market in fishery and aquaculture products (recast)³
- having regard to Council Directive 2006/88/EC, as regards requirements for quarantine of aquaculture animals⁴, and to Commission Decision 2008/946/EC of 12 December 2008 implementing this directive⁵,
- having regard to Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy⁶,
- having regard to Regulation (EC) No 66/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2009 on the EU Ecolabel⁷,

¹ OJ L 204, 6.8.2009, p. 15.

² OJ L 81, 27.3.2009, p. 15.

³ OJ L 79, 25.3.2009, p. 7.

⁴ OJ L 328, 24.11.06, p. 14.

⁵ OJ L 337, 16.12.08, p. 94.

⁶ OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1.

⁷ OJ L 27, 31.01.2010, p. 1.

- having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 of 28 June 2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products¹,
- having regard to Commission Regulation (EC) No 1251/2008 of 12 December 2008 implementing Council Directive 2006/88/EC as regards conditions and certification requirements for the placing on the market and the import into the Community of aquaculture animals and products thereof and laying down a list of vector species²,
- having regard to the Commission communications entitled ‘Guidelines for an integrated approach to maritime policy: towards best practice in integrated maritime governments and stakeholder consultation’ (COM(2008)0395), ‘Roadmap for maritime spatial planning: achieving common principles in the EU’ (COM(2008)0791) and ‘Developing the international dimension of the integrated maritime policy of the European Union’ (COM(2009)0536), and to the recent progress report on the EU’s integrated maritime policy (COM(2009)0540),
- having regard to its resolution of 25 February 2010³ on the Commission Green Paper on the reform of the common fisheries policy (COM(2009)0163),
- having regard to its resolution of 4 December 2008⁴ on the adoption of a European Cormorant Management Plan,
- having regard to its resolution of 2 September 2008⁵ on fisheries and aquaculture in the context of integrated coastal zone management in Europe,
- having regard to its legislative resolution of 31 January 2008⁶ on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the submission by Member States of statistics on aquaculture,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 December 2007⁷ on the common organisation of the market in the fisheries and aquaculture products sector,
- having regard to its resolution of 7 September 2006⁸ on the Commission communication entitled 'Launching a debate on a Community approach towards eco-labelling schemes for fisheries products' (COM(2005)0275),
- having regard to its resolution of 16 January 2003⁹ on aquaculture in the European Union: present and future,
- having regard to the Guidelines for the examination of State aid to fisheries and aquaculture¹⁰ and the acceptance of the Guidelines by Member States¹,

¹ OJ L 189, 20.7.2007, p. 1.

² OJ L 337, 16.12.2008, p. 41.

³ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2010)0039.

⁴ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0583.

⁵ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0382.

⁶ OJ C 68E, 21.3.2009, p. 39.

⁷ OJ C 305 E, 18.12.2008, p. 271.

⁸ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2006)0347.

⁹ Texts adopted, P5_TA(2003)0023.

¹⁰ OJ C 84 , 3.4.2008, p. 10.

- having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and its resolution of 7 May 2009 on Parliament's new role and responsibilities in implementing the Treaty of Lisbon²,
 - having regard to the report of the fourth session of the FAO Sub-Committee on Aquaculture³,
 - having regard to the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries⁴,
 - having regard to Rule 48 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 (A7-0000/2010),
- A. whereas at present there is no specific, harmonised EU legislative framework for the aquaculture sector, and whereas this sector is instead covered by a variety of EU legislative texts in different areas (environment, public health, etc.) and national legislation which may vary considerably from one Member State to another, thereby creating confusion among operators in the sector, in addition to causing discrimination and distortions of the market,
- B. whereas the aquaculture sector is an innovative high-technology economic sector requiring intensive structural and research investment, long-term operational and financial planning, and hence legal certainty and clear and stable legislative frameworks,
- C. whereas the aquaculture sector directly interacts with policy areas which are of prime importance to our society, such as the environment, urban planning, regional development, public health and consumer protection, and whereas it is therefore essential that due consideration be given to the sector's interests and that it be treated fairly,
- D. whereas the 2002 Commission communication has proved clearly inadequate in encouraging Member States to give a significant boost to the development of the EU aquaculture sector, while the past decade has seen a substantial growth of the sector worldwide, in addition to that in the demand for fishery products, from both farmed and wild fish, with a sharp increase in imports of such products from non-EU countries,
- E. whereas the sustainable aquaculture sector can make a major contribution to ensuring high-quality food supplies as regards fish products and thus to reducing the pressure on wild species, as well as playing an important role as regards food security, economic activities and employment, especially in rural and coastal regions,
- F. whereas the EU should therefore give the sustainable aquaculture sector and its development at EU level greater strategic importance, providing it with the necessary financial aid,

¹ OJ C 115, 20.5.2009, p. 15.

² Texts adopted, P6_TA(2009)0373.

³ Meeting in Puerto Varas (Chile) on 6-10 October 2008, <http://www.fao.org/fishery/nems/36393/en>

⁴ FAO Code of Conduct adopted on 31 October 1995.

- G. whereas the considerable research and technological innovation required to ensure the competitiveness and sustainability of aquaculture and enable operators to be successful in the sector is beyond the possibilities of many companies in the sector, in particular SMEs,
- H. whereas, in order to be effective, a sustainable aquaculture policy will need to be structured in such a way as to benefit from the multidisciplinary involvement of all stakeholders in the sector,
- I. whereas the EU is already applying a policy of support for organic agriculture and aquaculture products through the implementation of Regulations Nos 834/2007, 889/2008 and 710/2009, as the key to a European sustainable aquaculture sector, closely connected to optimising its own product to make it more competitive and improve consumer protection,
- J. whereas any sustainable aquaculture policy, whether at Community or national level, must take account of distinctions between various types of aquaculture production (saltwater fish, freshwater fish, molluscs and crustaceans), with measures properly geared to their market and competition structures and issues,
- K. whereas the aquaculture industry must take into account the organic and physiological differences between fish species, having due regard to their feeding cycles and habits and the stress levels caused by farm density or transport, and use more humane slaughter techniques,
- L. whereas aquaculture operators in many countries complain about bureaucratic obstacles and administrative formalities that limit their productivity and competitiveness, doing more than a little to discourage new plants and investment in the industry.
- M. whereas, at the same time, many EU countries lack specific national or regional development plans that regulate installations in coastal and marine areas and clearly identify the zones available for aquaculture plants, thereby preventing easily foreseeable conflicts of interest with other economic sectors, such as tourism, agriculture and coastal fishing,
- N. whereas a sustainable aquaculture policy can coexist with 'Natura 2000' areas and can even contribute positively to the management thereof,
- O. whereas EU products currently face fierce competition from imports from non-EU countries (above all, Turkey, Chile, Vietnam and China), where companies can operate with much lower overheads, as they are not subject to the same stringent environmental and plant health legislation, thereby putting the EU aquaculture sector under further pressure,

GENERAL

1. Welcomes the Commission initiative of submitting the aforementioned communication COM(2009)0162, as an indication of greater attention being given to the sustainable aquaculture sector, and hopes that this will lead to a legislative review, that will be better geared to needs and the challenges facing the sector, with a view to consolidating it at

global level;

2. Points out that, with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, Parliament has ceased to be a consultative body in the fisheries sector and has become a co-legislator in the aquaculture sector as well;
3. Considers that any legislative reform of the aquaculture sector should fit in, in a smooth and complementary manner, with the current process of reform of the CFP;
4. Points out that Parliament has already in the past drawn attention to the need for more concise, consistent and transparent legislation on aquaculture;
5. Expresses the view that a strong sustainable aquaculture sector could act as a catalyst for the development of many coastal and rural areas in the EU and contribute to the development of related production activities;
6. Considers that targeted support for technological and scientific research is an essential prerequisite for the development of a sustainable, modern, efficient, economically viable and environment-friendly aquaculture sector;
7. Considers that the success of the European sustainable aquaculture sector will be largely dependent on the establishment, nationally and locally, of a more business-friendly environment, and calls on the Member States, therefore, to work towards this without delay and to promote exchanges of experience and best practices at EU level;
8. Considers it essential that the Member States implement administrative simplification procedures as soon as possible, introducing transparent and standardised concession procedures in respect of applications for the establishment of new aquaculture plants;
9. Considers that a sustainable and organic aquaculture sector should be in a position to provide consumers with high-quality food products ensuring a healthy and balanced nutrition;
10. Considers it urgent and essential to lay down rigorous, transparent quality and traceability criteria for EU aquaculture products, to improve feedstuffs and general fish health and to introduce and strengthen certification criteria for high-quality aquaculture products and organic aquaculture production;
11. Considers that the priority aim of environmental quality certification for aquaculture products should be to promote the environment-friendly use of living aquatic resources in the context of a sustainable development that takes due account of environmental, economic and social factors, with due respect for the principles of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries¹ and future FAO guidelines;
12. Takes the view that, while any proposed EU legislation should address general aspects such as environmental impact assessments, water use and protection and product traceability, a generic or undifferentiated approach must not be adopted in that legislation;

¹ Adopted by the FAO on 31 October 1995.

13. Stresses the need for a firmer commitment from the EU on investments in sustainable aquaculture, in the form of financing under the Community Fisheries Fund;
14. Considers it essential, lastly, that all the appropriate steps be taken to ensure that any aquaculture product imported into the EU from a third country complies in full with the same public health and food safety standards as the equivalent Community product, and that meticulous checks at the appropriate sites contribute effectively towards this, without creating new trade barriers, but in encouraging the exchange of best practices with developing countries;

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS

Legislative, administrative and financial framework

15. Calls on the Commission swiftly to bring forward a proposal for a regulation consolidating in a single text all the EU legislation governing the aquaculture sector;
16. Calls on the Commission to set out in that regulation specific criteria and general rules for the various product categories, with which every aquaculture establishment in the Community must comply, but to delegate responsibility for the implementation phase to the competent territorial authorities, in full accordance with the principle of subsidiarity – e.g. parameters on environmental impact, water supply, feeding of farmed fish, molluscs and crustaceans, product traceability and labelling, and fish health and respect for feeding habits, etc.;
17. Calls on the Commission to strive to ensure that the Member States make a formal undertaking to document and apply their countries' existing environmental and tourism protection legislation and – in respect of those zones not subject to restrictions – to adopt the necessary development plans for the management of marine, coastal and inland water areas, so that aquaculture operations can be set up by means of facilitating access to space;
18. Calls on the Member States to work towards a 'maritime development plan' and the integrated management of coastal areas, as provided for under the EU's new maritime policy and in line with environmental impact assessments, which covers all the different product categories in the sector, such as sub-coastal aquaculture, offshore and freshwater aquaculture, and to undertake to reduce existing bureaucratic obstacles to obtaining the requisite permits and concessions to start a sustainable aquaculture activity, possibly by setting up 'one-stop shops' that centralise the administrative formalities incumbent on operators in a single location;
19. Hopes that the future European Fisheries Fund in support of the reformed CFP will provide for specific budget lines for sustainable aquaculture development and support for investment in that sector, with a particular focus on technologically innovative plants with a lesser environmental impact (e.g. water purification systems for eliminating residues and pollutants), farms that promote fish health and sustainable forms of aquaculture;
20. Hopes that this Fund will take into due account the need to provide financial support for SMEs and family-run enterprises;

21. Emphasises also the need to ensure increased financial contributions for scientific research, innovation and technology transfers in the field of sustainable, organic, offshore and freshwater aquaculture, by means of sectoral policies covering all key aspects, from the supply chain to the optimisation and promotion of products on the market, with better management of those aspects in the thematic axes set out under the Structural Funds and in Community programmes;
22. Calls on the Commission and Member States to support the experimental farming of native species in the interests of diversifying Community aquaculture production, so that it can offer high-quality and high added-value products, by encouraging research and exchanges of best practices on those species and on the production methods concerned, in order to enable aquaculture products better to compete with other innovative food products;
23. Calls on the Commission to provide incentives for the development of offshore aquaculture facilities operating in difficult environmental and climate conditions (e.g. in the Atlantic Ocean) by allowing suitable derogations to the rules on state aid;
24. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop the role of the professional aquaculturist and to introduce a training policy which meets the needs of the sector and which fully harnesses the possibility not only of retraining members of the professional fishing industry in alternative methods of managing aquatic environments but also contributes to creating jobs for young people in rural and coastal areas and the outermost regions;
25. Calls on the Member States to consider creating specialist organisations for the promotion of aquaculture products; calls also on the Commission to extend the rules on the common market organisations to the sustainable aquaculture sector and to support and provide incentives for promotional campaigns at EU level and on external markets;

Quality and consumer protection policy

26. Takes the view that sustainable aquaculture development cannot take precedence over a stringent quality policy, environment-friendly production methods respectful of animal welfare, rigorous health standards and a high level of consumer protection;
27. Calls on the Commission, therefore, to develop a specific EU quality label for aquaculture products, along with a specific organic aquaculture label, establishing strict rules in accordance with EU principles of high-quality organic production, so as to assure the consumer of the reliability of the system for the production, control and full traceability of aquaculture products;
28. Calls on the Commission to organise and promote, in close cooperation with the Member States, institutional information campaigns to promote aquaculture products, including organic aquaculture products;
29. Reiterates the views it has already expressed in its resolution on the adoption of a

European Cormorant Management Plan¹, and points out that reducing the prejudice caused by cormorants and other birds of prey to aquaculture firms is a major factor in their survival and competitiveness;

30. Calls on the Commission to propose specific criteria in relation to the well-being of farmed fish, such as maximum levels of farming density, the quantity of vegetable and animal proteins that can be used in feedstuffs on fish farms, and which take into account the nutritional requirements of the fish species farmed, the phases in their life cycle and the environmental conditions, and to promote transportation and slaughter practices which limit sources of stress, and the changing of water in fish ponds in such a way as to guarantee the well-being of the fish being farmed there;

External relations

31. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to strive to ensure that Community customs legislation is applied rigorously to all aquaculture products, including feedstuffs and raw materials for feedstuffs, imported from third countries;
32. Calls on the Commission to strive to ensure swifter harmonisation of the procedures for the approval of the pharmaceuticals used in aquaculture, and to promote reciprocal advanced know-how agreements with third countries (e.g. Norway);
33. Reiterates the importance of conducting systematic checks at ports giving access to the internal market in order to provide consumers with a watertight guarantee that the aquaculture products imported from third countries are systematically subject to stringent quality control and are therefore fully compliant with EU rules in the field of hygiene and public health;
34. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to champion those principles both at the WTO and in all the relevant institutional fora;
35. Calls on the Commission, lastly, to sponsor, as part of the EU policy on cooperation with developing countries, support and training measures designed to help steer the awareness of aquaculturists in those countries towards a policy on quality and higher production standards, particularly as regards the environment and hygiene;
36. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

¹ Kindermann Report (P6_TA(2008)0583).

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

This report seeks to make a significant contribution to the development of a new EU strategy in the field of aquaculture designed to promote its sustainable development in the medium and long term. It also provides a set of operational guidelines and concrete demands addressed to the Council and the European Commission, which it calls on to present an appropriate legislative proposal in the near future.

The European aquaculture industry numbers more than 16 500 firms, with a total annual turnover of more than EUR 3.5 billion, generating some 64 000 direct and indirect jobs¹. European aquaculture production doubled to 1.3 million tonnes between 1981 and 2001, but more or less stagnated (+0.5%) until 2008, whereas world production grew very rapidly (+7.6% a year) over the same period². In a global context of high demand for aquaculture products, Europe contributes just 2% of world aquaculture production³, while its internal consumption amounts to more than five million tonnes a year; it consequently has to import two-thirds of the products it needs from non-EU countries; it consequently has to import two-thirds of the products it needs from non-EU countries.

There is no EU legislation on the aquaculture sector at present, and it continues to be covered by a plethora of EU legislation and national rules which can vary significantly between states, creating a legal framework lacking in transparency and discriminatory situations and market distortions that do little to encourage investment in the sector. The Commission adopted an initial communication in 2002⁴, which was the subject of a European Parliament legislative resolution of January 2003⁵, has failed to increase the transparency of the regulatory framework. On the contrary, the Commission and Council have continued to adopt, often via the comitology procedure⁶, detailed rules applicable to aquaculture (organic and otherwise), in respect of which Parliament has had no opportunity whatsoever to voice a direct opinion. The recent Commission communication of April 2009 which forms the subject of this report therefore provides the chance to assess the appropriateness of introducing a specific EU framework for the aquaculture sector, with the ultimate objective remaining the structured development of a sustainable European aquaculture industry which respects environmental balances, increases the economic worth of aquaculture operators and their local communities and offers consumers more guarantees. It will also be appropriate to assess the relevant synergies – at both legislative and operational level – between the proposals formulated by the aquaculture industry and the framing of the new CFP which is currently being developed for the period post-2012.

¹ Framian (2009) 'Definition of data collection needs for aquaculture'.

² European Commission 'Study on the economic performance and the competitiveness of aquaculture in the European Union', December 2008', December 2008.

³ FAO (2009) Fishstat Plus Database, 'Aquaculture Production 1950-2007'.

⁴ 'A strategy for the sustainable development of European aquaculture' COM(2002)511 fin.

⁵ Hugues Martin report (A5-0448/2002, 2002/2058(INI)), adopted in plenary on 16.01.2003.

⁶ e.g. Regulation (EC) 710/2009, published in the OJ of 5 August 2009 and amending Regulation 834/2007.