

## **MEMORANDUM ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AQUACULTURE IN EUROPE**

Global consumption of fish for human and animal nutrition is increasing steadily and could reach 179 million tonnes worldwide by 2015 according to the United Nations food agency (FAO), a figure 36% higher than in 2002. In the face of the increasing scarcity of certain fisheries resources, the necessity for sustainable and responsible fisheries is ever more obvious day by day and fishing alone cannot meet the general population's need for marine products. Today, almost half of all fish consumed in the world already comes from aquaculture rather than from fisheries as before.

In this context, aquaculture will play an increasingly important role, alongside and supplementing sea fisheries. And in fact this sector is expanding in very many regions around the world.

The development of this economic sector must also be a priority for the European Union. It represents only 2.5% of global aquaculture production and this share is falling despite the fact that its importance in consumption worldwide is twice as great (5.4%). Moreover, farming accounts for no more than 11% of fish production in Europe, compared with 41% worldwide. The EU cannot reasonably base a food strategy for its population where products from the sea and fresh water are concerned solely on imports from third countries which do not impose upon themselves the same demands in terms of health and protection of the environment and only part of whose production meets Community requirements.

In addition, aquaculture is a sector productive of both wealth and jobs (it employs more than 65,000 individuals in the European Union for total production of nearly 1.5 million tonnes) and is structurally and environmentally important for the EU in both coastal and rural areas, especially wetlands and freshwater.

Given these new challenges today and those to come tomorrow, at Community and global levels, Europe needs to develop its strategy for sustainable and responsible aquaculture, producing healthy, high-quality products in conditions protective of the animal welfare, environment and traditional landscape heritage around four core components:

- Development of an integrated European policy on aquaculture;
- Addition of value to the image of aquaculture and the promotion of its products;
- Guarantees that products are qualitative and healthy ; guarantees that they are processed in conditions protective of the animal welfare, environment and traditional landscape heritage;
- Economic assistance for the sector to assure its future.

The present memorandum is intended to promote progress on proposals to allow the European Union, with the above in mind, to add the indispensable elements to its policy where aquaculture is concerned. This is so because although significant provisions have been put in place in recent years, especially since the adoption of a strategy in favour of aquaculture in 2002, there is now a need to go still further.

## 1. An integrated Community policy

Aquaculture is covered by numerous Community regulatory instruments not all of which share identical objectives. Firstly, there are of course all those that are part of the Community Fisheries Policy: the Common Organisation of the Market, the European Fisheries Fund, regulations on organic aquaculture and the introduction of exotic species, and so on. Also of direct relevance to aquaculture are instruments for the protection of the environment such as the Water Framework Directive, the draft "Strategy for the Marine Environment" directive and the Natura 2000 initiative. It must also comply with Community provisions in the "hygiene package" on the healthiness of foodstuffs and those on animal welfare. And lastly, aquaculture is directly affected by horizontal initiatives such as the promotion of Integrated Management of Coastal Zones, the integrated marine policy or the framework programmes for research and development. Naturally, this list is not exhaustive.

**It is important that all these Community policies should be mutually consistent and that they take into account the goal of sustainable and responsible development of European aquaculture.** They must contribute, each in its allotted sphere, to the long-term viability and development of a European aquaculture sector capable of providing EU citizens with sufficient supply of aquaculture products completely safe in health terms along with satisfactory protection of the environment and traditional landscape heritage; they must be conducive to the long-term viability and development of an economic sector that produces wealth, creates employment and is structurally and environmentally important for Europe's regions, in both coastal zones and rural areas.

**It can now be seen to be necessary to devote effort to ensuring that the various regulations are coherent,** with an additional concern for greater administrative simplicity with a due respect to a proportionality and subsidiarity rules.

## 2. Enhanced awareness and recognition of aquaculture activity and products

Aquaculture in the European Union has amply demonstrated both its productive capacity and its great potential. Its expertise, the quality and benefits of its products (safety for health, regularity, availability, freshness, etc.) are known quantities. In addition, European aquaculture uses production methods ever more protective of the environment and animal welfare: reduction of effluent, animal feedstuffs, etc. It is even in some cases the key to the preservation of certain ecosystems and traditional landscape heritage in rural areas, especially ponds and wetlands.

However, this is a sector that is having trouble developing in Europe. It is sometimes difficult to win acceptance at the local level for its presence and, *a fortiori*, its expansion. This is the case in geographical areas where other activities are competing for occupancy of available space. It is also true because aquaculture and its products, the development of which is recent in comparison with more traditional forms of agricultural production, are held back by a negative image, which does not correspond to the features of traditional forms and of the reality of aquaculture in general, concerning their potential consequences for the environment and the quality of the

products. Acceptance of this economic sector by the public and by the authorities capable of contributing to its development in the Member States requires better knowledge and recognition of the industry, its products and the conditions in which they are produced.

**With this in mind, a communication strategy must be put in place at Community level to establish an image for European aquaculture that is aligned with reality and traditional heritage of rural areas and which can thus help promote its development.**

### **3. Healthy products and protective of the environment**

Products from aquaculture are subject to special monitoring in order to offer consumers every possible guarantee of their safety for health. This is notably the case for the surveillance of aquaculture, specially shellfish and oyster farming areas, which are covered by specific provisions in Community regulations on the safety for health of foodstuffs (cf. the "hygiene package"). This surveillance must be based on **objective analysis of the risks to the health of consumers**, taking into account **the need to abide by the precautionary principle** wherever a fully comprehensive risk assessment is not possible due to the available data. The procedures for classification of production areas with regard to health (in particular the consequences of uncertainties relating to the official test method), the test methods used to measure toxicity in shellfish, especially phycotoxins, and more generally changes in regulatory provisions on health, **must be based in all cases on such an analysis. Their impact on the sector must also have been identified.**

Additionally, the long-term viability of aquaculture and the healthiness of the resulting products, shellfish in particular, are also closely dependent on the quality of the environment in which those products are farmed. However, coastal, inland and freshwater zones are all too often used for discharging numerous varieties of pollution arising in the main from human activity. **For this reason, there is a need to be particularly vigilant on the quality of coastal, inland and freshwaters and on Community regulations in this domain, especially those relating to the Water Framework Directive. In particular, this dispositions must remain at the very least at the current level of stringency where oyster farming areas are concerned, these being subject to a specific directive due to disappear in 2013.**

As an essential prerequisite for healthy products, health management in aquaculture has to be strengthened. The risks of pathogen transfer by introduction of alien species have to be minimized (e.g. import of crayfish only deep frozen or processed products to avoid further distribution of crayfish plague)

Extensive and environmental friendly forms of aquaculture in marsh, ponds, rural and coastal areas should be supported since it contributes to the local economy and landscape heritage of many regions and to the upkeep of wetlands, and by the same token to the maintenance and the positive impact on specific ecosystems. It is currently threatened by predation from certain species benefiting from Community protection. The increase in numbers of predators in this context a growing problem for pond and

lake-based fish farming. In particular, as far as cormorants are concerned, a **European management plan could help to control and regulate the cormorant population and at the same time enable fish farming to be retained in water, rural and coastal areas.**

#### **4. An economic sector with the means to assist it for an assured future**

In order to assure its future and allow aquaculture to develop in Europe, a number of assistance measures will be required. The intention of these would notably be to provide:

##### **- Support for young people entering the industry**

Only the aquaculture sector is effectively capable of meeting the growing demand from European consumers for aquatic products but, paradoxically, while aid is available to assist young farmers and fishermen to start out in their industries, no such support exists for young aquaculturists.

In order to guarantee fair treatment of professionals across these different sectors and assure the future of an industry that is destined to play a major role in feeding the general population and giving structure to numerous coastal zones and rural areas, with a due respect to the gender issue, it is necessary to put in place under the European Fisheries Fund **a support regime to benefit young aquaculturists similar to that already in place in the agricultural sector.**

##### **- Coverage for risks**

Aquaculturists must cope with many risks relating to climate, natural disasters, market and health issues (the safety of their products, livestock diseases). **Measures or tools addressing the consequences of those risks**, with a possible public assistance, over and above the current provisions contained in the European Fisheries Fund should be conceived in the same spirit as the measures implemented in the agricultural sphere.

Such measures or tools might take the form of a **contribution to insurance schemes, mutual funds or other instruments** aimed at covering aquaculturists against loss of production or to provide aquaculturists who are members of a scheme with financial compensation to address the economic consequences of livestock diseases, natural disasters and public health bans on the marketing of their products.

##### **- An end to distortion of competition**

The European Union applies certain mandatory requirements relating to food, environment and livestock that are more stringent than those applied by a fair number of its international competitors, doing so in order to meet a range of expectations from society. Such requirements should not lead to unfair competition from imported products. This means that **checks on the quality of imported products should be improved**, without questioning the principle of free trade in goods

Because of the high production costs in the Community, the Community strategy should include a framework to enhance competitiveness, based on consumer perception of sustainability, high quality and safe products. This could be achieved, among others, through encouragement for research, innovation in product quality (including hatcheries

and nurseries), diversification, traceability, chain logistics and promotional campaigns.

The proposals made in this memorandum are intended to encourage the development of European aquaculture in a manner that is sustainable, contributes to Europe's food strategy and protects the environment. They should be taken into consideration by the European Commission and examined in the context of the work the Council is to commence in the coming months.

<p>For Bulgaria Valeri MITKOV TSVETANOV Minister for Agriculture and Food</p> 	<p>For Cyprus Michalis POLYNIKI CHARALAMBIDES Minister for Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment</p> 
<p>For the Czech Republic Petr GANDALOVIC Minister for Agriculture</p> 	<p>For Estonia Tiit NABER Deputy Permanent Representative</p> 
<p>For Finland Sirikka-Liisa ANTILLA Minister for Agriculture and Forestry</p> 	<p>For France Michel BARNIER Minister for Agriculture and Fishery</p> 
<p>For Greece Alexandros CONTOS Minister for Rural Development and Food</p> 	<p>For Hungary Ágnes VARGHA Deputy Permanent Representative</p> 
<p>For Italy Lucas ZAIA Minister for Agriculture, Food and Forestry policy</p> 	<p>For Lithuania Kazimira Danute PRUNSKUNIE Minister for Agriculture</p> 

<p>For Malta George PULLICINO Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs</p> 	<p>For Poland Marek SAWICKI Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development</p> 
<p>For Portugal Jaime SILVA Minister for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries</p> 	<p>For Romania Dacian CIOLOS Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development</p> 
<p>For Slovakia Peter JAVORCIK Deputy Permanent Representative</p> 	<p>For Spain Elena ESPINOSA MANGANA Minister for the Environment and Rural and Marine Environment</p> 
<p>For Latvia Martins ROZE Minister for Agriculture</p> 	<p>For Slovenia Iztok JARC Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Food</p> 