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LIMITE

PECHE 234

NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	Draft Council Conclusions on the EU's new aquaculture strategic guidelines

1. The French Presidency and the incoming Czech Presidency jointly presented the draft Council conclusions on the EU's new aquaculture strategic guidelines¹ at the Working Party on Fisheries Policy meeting on 2 June 2022. The document was prepared on the initiative of the future Czech Presidency and it is a result of a presidency trio cooperation. Its aim is to ensure the appropriate follow-up to the Commission communication of 12 May 2021 entitled “Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030” (COM(2021)0236). The strengthening of the role of aquaculture is one of the main priorities of the Czech Presidency and these Council conclusions reflect the main challenges of EU aquaculture that need to be resolved and its main elements that need to be developed in the future.

¹ Doc. ST 9485/22

2. The Working Party on Fisheries Policy held a discussion on the first draft and some delegations submitted written comments in the following days. Two further versions of the text² were issued and discussed at the subsequent Working Party meetings on 23 June and on 30 June. A final draft³ was submitted for written consultations and approved on 1 July.
3. In view of the above, the Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to:
- discuss the Council conclusions as set out in the annex to this note;
 - confirm its agreement on the text; and
 - suggest that the Agriculture and Fisheries Council at its meeting on 18 July 2022, proceed with an exchange of views and adopt the Council conclusions as set out in the annex to this note.
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² Doc. ST 9485/1/22 REV 1, doc. ST 9485/2/22 REV 2

³ Doc. ST 9485/3/22 REV 3

**DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON THE EU'S NEW AQUACULTURE STRATEGIC
GUIDELINES**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

- A. having regard to the Commission communication of 12 May 2021 entitled “Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030” (COM(2021)0236),
 - B. having regard to the Commission communication of 25 March 2021 entitled “An action plan for the development of organic production” (COM(2021)141),
 - C. having regard to the Council conclusions of 19 July 2021 on the action plan for the development of organic production,
 - D. having regard to the Commission communication of 11 December 2019 entitled “The European Green Deal” (COM(2019)0640),
 - E. having regard to the Commission communication of 20 May 2020 entitled “A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system” (COM(2020)0381),
 - F. having regard to the Council conclusions of 19 October 2020 on the Farm to Fork Strategy,
 - G. having regard to the Commission communication of 20 May 2020 entitled “EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 – Bringing nature back into our lives” (COM(2020)0380),
 - H. having regard to the Council conclusions of 23 October 2020 on Biodiversity – the need for urgent action,
- 1) **WELCOMES** the European Commission's document "Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU Aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030" (hereinafter “Aquaculture guidelines”) and **JOINS** the shared vision for the further development of aquaculture in the EU.

- 2) **SUPPORTS** the objective of building a sustainable, resilient and competitive marine and freshwater aquaculture sector and **UNDERLINES** that in order to achieve this objective, it needs to be given the appropriate high priority. This is essential to ensure the provision of nutritious, healthy and safe food and reduce the high EU's dependence on imports of fishery and aquaculture products. At the same time, this creates economic opportunities and jobs and represents a great example for the global transition to sustainable food systems.
- 3) **POINTS OUT** that the implementation of the Aquaculture guidelines will require an intensive cooperation between all relevant stakeholders, **SUPPORTS** the Commission's envisaged actions in the areas of coordination, technical support and guidance, and **RECALLS** the need to always take into account the specificities of each type of aquaculture system, both marine and freshwater.
- 4) **SUPPORTS AND EMPHASIZES** the need to bring science into practice via applied research and innovation, both at national and international level, in all parts of the aquaculture sector.
- 5) **TAKES INTO ACCOUNT** that access to space, especially for shellfish and marine fish farming, and good quality water must be provided if the growth, resilience and competitiveness of the aquaculture sector is to be ensured. **AGREES** with the Commission's call to review and streamline the regulatory and administrative framework, where relevant, including sharing of best practices on administrative procedures as envisaged in the annex to the Aquaculture guidelines.
- 6) **CONSIDERS** the co-existence of marine aquaculture with other activities, like renewable energy production (i.e. offshore wind farms) should be further explored and best practices to be shared among member states.
- 7) **NOTES** that access to water and the possibility, in accordance with applicable law, to dispose of the used water are fundamental requirements for any economically sustainable aquaculture activity. **HIGHLIGHTS** at the same time that a major part of the aquaculture sector faces the challenge that even the best available techniques cannot entirely avoid the emission of certain amounts of nutrients into the water, such as nitrogen or phosphorous.

- 8) **CALLS ON** the Commission to present a proposal to improve coherence between the objective of a growing sustainable aquaculture sector in the EU, on the one hand, and the EU environmental legislation, including in particular the Water Framework Directive, on the other hand.
- 9) **POINTS OUT** that biogenic substances originating from the aquaculture sector can be used, if other legislative conditions are met, as fertilizers or for biogas production. However, additional research and its innovative implementation are required.
- 10) **NOTES** with concern that in recent years the growing populations of predators, in particular protected species such as cormorants and otters, have become a considerable challenge for aquaculture operators. **UNDERLINES** the fact that in many regions the damages are of such extent that the businesses are not economically viable anymore, and that a mere compensation for losses due to predators is not economically sustainable. **STRESSES** that this issue is yet another hindrance for growth of the aquaculture sector, making it less sustainable and economically viable and destroying livelihoods dependent on aquaculture activities in many regions. **URGES** the Commission to timely identify effective and efficient EU-wide management measures to prevent or reduce the damage caused by predators that have a negative impact on aquaculture.
- 11) **STRESSES** that while increasing the performance of aquaculture with respect to the environment and animal welfare and setting ambitious targets, it is also necessary to ensure the economic and social stability and development of aquaculture businesses, and to ensure the safety of marketed products.
- 12) **SUPPORTS** the development of new freshwater and marine aquaculture methods, in particular those with low environmental impact, such as integrated multi-trophic aquaculture, recirculating aquaculture systems, algaculture and aquaponics.
- 13) **SUPPORTS** the strengthening of the environmental, socio-economic and historical role of aquaculture, which provides one of the most efficient sources of animal protein, including its contribution to climate change mitigation.

- 14) **STRESSES** that further steps in increasing the environmental performance of EU aquaculture include the growth of organic aquaculture, as envisaged in the Farm to Fork Strategy and the Action Plan for the Development of Organic Production. **HIGHLIGHTS**, however, that a detailed analysis of the current situation and an assessment of the barriers hindering the development of organic aquaculture is needed to take the necessary measures to achieve that objective. Furthermore, **INVITES** the Commission to consider proposing an amendment of Regulation (EU) 2018/848 on organic production and labelling of organic products, which currently only allows the certification of shellfish and fish farming as organic under very strict conditions.
- 15) **POINTS OUT** that some freshwater, marine and other aquaculture systems achieve higher environmental performance. However, there is currently no EU level scheme to label or certify sustainable products and no conditions are set to favour these types of aquaculture, even if the environmental performance is substantial. In this regard, **INVITES** the Commission to propose the establishment of a transparent EU system for recognising and rewarding producers for aquaculture management that is environmentally friendly and/or enables additional ecosystem services. It is essential to motivate producers to achieve a higher environmental and socio-economic performance of aquaculture. It is fundamental to ensure a long-term support scheme for these activities.
- 16) **SUPPORTS** the development of climate-change adaptation strategies for the sector at national level, based on the best scientific advice.
- 17) **POINTS OUT** that it is essential to make use of existing data when setting and monitoring environmental quality and fish welfare indicators. It is necessary to avoid an excessive increase in the administrative burden of data collection.
- 18) **SUPPORTS** the Commission's plans to promote EU aquaculture, which will contribute to informed consumer choice about sustainable European aquaculture products, and **UNDERLINES** that Member States play an important role in ensuring the broad dissemination of the EU-wide campaign on EU aquaculture. **RECOMMENDS** increasing consumer awareness of all the benefits of marine and freshwater aquaculture, especially as regards environmental, social and climate benefits.

- 19) **CALLS FOR** streamlining and setting specific conditions for data collection in the aquaculture sector, in particular by synchronizing the EU Data Collection Framework and the EU Statistical Law, taking into account different aquaculture systems. **WELCOMES** the simplification of administrative processes for the transmission and sharing of these data.
- 20) **IS AWARE** of the dangers of infectious diseases, which represent a very serious constraint on aquaculture production. **WELCOMES**, therefore, the development of best practices for disease management, in line with the strategy to strengthen EU and Member States actions against antimicrobial resistance (AMR – One Health Approach), as well as good husbandry practices, in which animal welfare should play an essential role. **SUPPORTS** the maintenance and streamlining of disease surveillance and reporting in EU Member States. **UNDERLINES** the importance of research on existing and new pathogens and suitable effective medications and treatments to ensure the health and well-being of cultivated organisms. **STRESSES** also the need for research in the intensification of breeding on disease-resistant and more resilient farm fish species.
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