



Third Recommendation on the Future Strategic Guidelines for the Sustainable Development of EU Aquaculture

May 2020 - (AAC 2020-03)



The Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC) gratefully acknowledges EU funding support.

Context:

This third Aquaculture Advisory Council's (AAC) Recommendation on the Future Strategic Guidelines for the Sustainable Development of EU Aquaculture has been drafted following an online informative meeting between DG MARE's aquaculture team¹ and the AAC members about the evolution of the drafting of this key piece of EU legislation for EU aquaculture stakeholders. It comes as a reaction to DG MARE's Working document² that was presented at this meeting and underlines some AAC recommendations previously detailed in the text of the 1st³ and 2nd⁴ AAC advice on this matter.

1. The AAC agrees on the need for a recovery strategy to mitigate the negative impacts and long-term effects created by the outbreak of Covid-19 and on the listed objectives for the Guidelines and recognises that specific measures have already been brought in for this purpose. It is essential the Strategic Guidelines maintains its focus on the long-term sustainability of the sector and its contribution to the European Green Deal agenda.
2. The AAC proposes that the Guidelines should be reviewed every 18 months and not every 3 years.
3. The AAC supports establishing an EU Aquaculture Assistance mechanism including an on-line platform.
4. Specific guidelines for subsectors such as shellfish farming might also be provided.
5. The AAC strongly supports the proposed 'establishment by EU Members States of national aquaculture working groups involving relevant national and regional public authorities dealing with aquaculture and relevant stakeholders to streamline national legislation and guidance on the regulatory framework applicable to the sector', in an effort to improve communication with regulatory bodies and reform legislative process.
6. The AAC agrees that the Guidelines should encourage EU Member States to coordinate planning in areas of common interest like, commitment, and expenditure on aquaculture under different MFF funds. The AAC calls upon the Commission to ensure a timely implementation of the new EMFF. EMFF funding should be linked with the achievement of the SG priorities/objectives. The AAC recognises that the European Commission is best placed to coordinate European activities and calls on it to put mechanisms in place to support Member States in these activities.
7. The AAC underlines that the sustainable development of EU aquaculture by using MFF funds should be done in a friendly administrative environment for the existing or new SMEs dealing with aquaculture.
8. The AAC supports the use of sea basin strategies and river management plans and agrees on the need for aquaculture globally to develop in a sustainable manner.

¹ Meeting held via Webex on the 29 April 2020.

² Working Document shared by DG MARE for internal AAC diffusion only on the 22 April 2020.

³ Recommendation on the Future Strategic Guidelines for the sustainable development of EU aquaculture (October 2019): <https://www.aac-europe.org/en/recommendations/position-papers/224-recommendation-on-the-future-strategic-guidelines-for-the-sustainable-development-of-eu-aquaculture>

⁴ Second Recommendation on the Future Strategic Guidelines for the Sustainable Development of EU Aquaculture (January 2020): <https://www.aac-europe.org/en/recommendations/position-papers/228-second-recommendation-on-the-future-strategic-guidelines-for-the-sustainable-development-of-eu-aquaculture>

9. The AAC supports launching a coordinated EU-wide communication campaign in 2021. The campaign must be educational on sustainability issues and cover the products on European markets to effectively inform consumer choice.
10. The AAC agrees on the need to improve the communication on EU aquaculture to consumers and citizens and supports the proposed actions. The AAC emphasises the need for campaign materials to be educational on sustainability issues and highlights that NGOs can be involved.
11. The AAC supports the proposed actions on spatial planning and administrative procedures. The AAC proposes to include a screening exercise to identify the main barriers across Member States. The AAC commits itself to defining key criteria for MSP under the consensus model. Further to this the EC should encourage the EU member states to set a timetable to lift the main barriers. The AAC supports the proposed actions aiming at streamlining the legislation which impacts the aquaculture activity mainly done by SMEs.
12. The AAC supports the proposed actions on environmental performance. The AAC highlights the importance of scientific monitoring of environmental services.
13. The EU Green Deal states that imported food that does not comply with EU environmental standards should not be allowed on EU markets. The AAC calls upon the Commission to include enforcement mechanisms for this objective in the Guidelines. The AAC calls upon the Commission to include the objective of promoting a level-playing field in the Guidelines. Further to this the AAC calls upon the Commission to find a lasting solution with the Turkish government to ensure a level playing field on the import of Turkish-farmed fish.
14. The AAC supports the proposed actions on climate change but points to the need for a 'tool' that can measure climate impact on farm level.
15. The AAC supports the goal of the Green Deal to make EU aquaculture carbon neutral by 2050 and supports the Commission on developing short-, medium-, and long-term targets to meet this goal.
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17. The AAC supports the proposed actions on 'Health and welfare' and emphasises the importance that fish welfare is included in the work programme of an EU reference centre for animal welfare. Fish health and welfare in light of the COVID-19 emergency should be further contextualized in the "ONE Health" principle. Further research about the benefits of animal welfare for aquaculture production should be encouraged. Further, 'developing' good practices should be strengthened as 'developing and implementing' good practices to ensure that EMFF funds are available for farmers making these improvements.
18. The AAC shares the views on the increasingly important role of producer organisations and inter-branch organisations in the improvement of the market organisation, and the recommendations set for them, for reaching the objective of the sustainable development of EU aquaculture but further advises the promotion of transnational activities between POs.
19. The AAC agrees on the importance of research and development and supports the proposed actions. Besides, the support of the transfer of knowledge and technology to the industry has a vital importance. The AAC notes that the EU has prior to these Guidelines invested heavily in aquaculture and the AAC would welcome an analysis of the barriers for making use of present knowledge.

20. The AAC supports the action on 'Integration in local communities' and 'Control'.
21. The AAC welcomes the proposals on 'Data and monitoring'. The AAC would like to request clarification from the European Commission on how it defines the word sustainable and which indicators it uses to measure the sustainability of EU aquaculture. The AAC notes the widespread use of the word 'sustainable' and encourage the Commission to widen the scope on indicators, including existing legal definitions and the current expectations of consumers, to embrace this term.
22. The AAC welcomes the level of ambitions in the proposed review but points to need for prioritizing the listed actions and allocate them accordingly to each of the involved partner (EC, MS and AAC). The AAC points out that a healthy and biodiverse environment presents the primary goal to counter the effects of climate change and to allow for any aquaculture activities to take place in the future. The AAC is grateful to play its part in this, together with other important actors.



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