



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,  
MARE.A.2/BVT

**Subject: AAC recommendation on risks of bivalve mollusc pathogen emergence in connection with climate change**

Dear Mr Brian Thomsen,

I would like to thank you for your mail including the “*Recommendation on risks of bivalve mollusc pathogen emergence in connection with climate change*”. I am aware of the particular vulnerability of shellfish farming to disease, water pollution and climate change impact. This is acknowledged in the “*Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030*” (COM(2021)236 final, hereafter the Guidelines).

As you know, the Guidelines identify climate change adaptation and mitigation as a key area for further work and announce that the Commission will develop a guidance document on sectoral climate adaptation plans and strategies. The shellfish sector will be addressed as well in this document. We intend to finalise this guidance document by the end of 2023. In addition, the Guidelines support and promote research and innovation on animal health, including on shellfish diseases.

The Aquaculture Advisory Council specifically recommends to the European Commission

- *to protect shellfish water quality by ensuring good shellfish status as described in the AAC recommendation relating to the protection of the quality of shellfish waters (April 2020).*

The Commission is committed to the improvement of water quality through the correct implementation of the existing EU water legislation, such as the Water Framework Directive and the Urban Waste Water Framework Directive. In the broader framework of the Green Deal, the Commission continues to pursue policies aimed at a healthier environment, including the recently published Zero Pollution Package and the Nature Restoration Law.

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The Guidelines note that the complexity of EU legislation in place to guarantee good water quality for bivalve molluscs can create confusion. They acknowledge that this legislation would benefit from clarifications and better linkages with other relevant pieces of EU legislation. Greater clarity is especially needed on differences in requirements (in terms of classification of harvesting areas, sanitary surveys, registers of protected areas, etc.). The Guidelines envisage the development of a guidance document on environmental performance, which will include guidance on implementing legal requirements under EU legislation.

- *to assess the impact of climate change on shellfish farming in the long term, particularly through the development of climate and socio-economic models.*

In Horizon 2020, two projects, ClimeFish and CERES, worked on assessing the impact of climate change on fisheries and aquaculture. They included several case studies on bivalve molluscs. Climate issues related to aquaculture are also in the scope of Horizon Europe Cluster 6 Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment.

- *to provide funding for animal health monitoring of shellfish stocks and for improving shellfish water quality directly linked to good health of the shellfish.*

Rules concerning disease prevention and animal health surveillance in aquatic animals are provided for in Regulation (EU) 2016/429 and the rules adopted on its basis. The objective of such rules is to ensure that competent authorities and operators carry out animal health surveillance and implement relevant biosecurity measures, which are designed to support the early detection, prevention and control of certain aquatic listed animal diseases, as well as emerging diseases.

The European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) may provide funding for such projects on the condition that they are included in the national programmes, and in accordance with the eligibility rules defined by the Member States concerned. The EMFAF regulation provides a framework for supporting similar kinds of operations that were possible under the EMFF, but without directly specifying possible type of measures in the text of the Regulation. You can check the eligibility of the projects for EMFAF support with the national authorities in charge of managing the operational programmes in the different Member States (see updated list of contact points: [https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/funding/emfaf\\_en#emfaf-support](https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/funding/emfaf_en#emfaf-support)).

- *to add a specific page for shellfish farming and animal health on the future European Commission website, dedicated to aquaculture to share any information related to the following areas: biodiversity monitoring, climate change, animal health surveillance and emerging pathogens, sharing of good animal health practices, etc.*

The future EU Aquaculture website is currently under construction. We will discuss with the contractor how to best address shellfish farming-related topics.

- *to identify and strengthens communication channels, exchange information on these subjects and integrate work on the definition of appropriate regulatory animal health terms between European actors (Member States, competent authorities, researchers, professional representatives) but also with international stakeholders.*

A number of well-established fora currently exist at which information is exchanged concerning surveillance, disease prevention and control in aquatic and terrestrial animals e.g. monthly meetings of the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed,

which are attended by the competent authorities of Member States; the annual meeting of EU Reference Laboratories (EURLs), including the EURLs for diseases of molluscs; the annual meeting of the National Reference Laboratories for mollusc diseases; regular meetings with stakeholders via the Advisory Group on Sustainability of Food Systems, and via its sub-group, the Animal Health Advisory Committee; international meetings including with the World Organisation for Animal Health. Such fora support an active and regular exchange of information between the European Commission, the competent authorities of Member States, other relevant stakeholders and international partners who are engaged in the European and global sphere of aquatic animal health, the main outcomes from which are published.

I hope you this reply is useful and I look forward to our continued fruitful cooperation. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Pascale COLSON, coordinator of the Advisory Councils ([Pascale.COLSON@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Pascale.COLSON@ec.europa.eu); +32.2.295.62.73), who will forward them to relevant colleagues.

Yours sincerely,

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