



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE.A.2/BVT

Subject: AAC Recommendation on “Priorities for EURCAW-aqua”

Dear Mr Brian Thomsen,

I would like to thank you for your email of 28th August 2024 sharing with us the “*Recommendation on Priorities for EURCAW-aqua*” and acknowledge the importance of the topics highlighted.

After consulting my Commission colleagues in the Directorate General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE), I would like to inform you that, as outlined in the Official Controls Regulation (EU) 2017/625, the primary role of the EU reference centres for animal welfare (EURCAW) is to support Member States’ competent authorities in enforcing current EU animal welfare legislation by developing and disseminating scientific and technical knowledge and to provide tools to assess animal welfare and conduct effective official controls. In this sense, I would like to stress that interpreting legislation is the prerogative of the Court of Justice, and not within the Centres’ remit. However, disseminating knowledge among Member States is part of the tasks of the Centre and will help to develop common approaches. Additionally, the EURCAW will support the European Commission as needed.

We agree that the EURCAW for aquatic animals (EURCAW-aqua) should focus on developing tools for improving animal welfare that are scientifically based and practical in real production systems. Your recommendations on knowledge transfer are noted.

We appreciate the AAC's recommendation to prioritise major aquaculture species and the emphasis on the need for the EURCAW-aqua to develop methods for assessing animal welfare and to provide scientific and technical expertise to support the development and application of animal welfare indicators. Furthermore, the EURCAW-aqua, in collaboration with the EU Aquaculture Assistance Mechanism, will work on fish welfare indicators as part of the implementation of the Commission’s “*Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030*”.

Regarding stakeholder engagement, the EURCAW-aqua is establishing a stakeholder platform and, similarly to other reference centres, will establish a reflection board to

Mr. Brian Thomson
Chairman of the AAC
Email : brian@danskakvakultur.dk
Rue de la Science, 10
B – 1000 Brussels
Belgium

Commission européenne/Europese Commissie, 1049 Bruxelles/Brussel, BELGIQUE/BELGIË - Tel. +32 22991111
Office: J-99 05/014 - Tel. direct line +32 229-50483

charlina.vitcheva@ec.europa.eu

exchange information and views with stakeholders in a structured manner. Additionally, all outputs produced by the Centre will be publicly available on its website, benefiting all interested stakeholders. The EURCAW-aqua will also engage with EFSA and other relevant networks to share best practices and coordinate efforts on animal welfare.

As part of the preparation of the work programme for the period 2025-2027, together with the EURCAW-aqua we will consider the views expressed by stakeholders including the recommendations of the AAC, to identify potential areas of work.

I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Julia RUBECK, coordinator of the Advisory Councils (Julia.Rubeck@ec.europa.eu; +32.2.296.88.89), who will forward them to relevant colleagues.

Yours sincerely,

(e-Signed)
Charlina VITCHEVA

c.c.: Cecile Fouquet : cecile.fouquet@aac-europe.org; secretariat@aac-europe.org;
cynthia.benites@aac-europe.org

