



AAC Recommendation on the re-evaluation of the Risk Assessment of Parasites in Farmed Fish Products

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Index

Index	2
I. Background	3
II. Justification	3
III. Recommendations.....	4

I. Background

The European Commission Regulation (EC/1276/2011) considers the risk of transmission of parasites to humans as negligible. This is based on the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) scientific opinion on the risk assessment of parasites in fishery products (BIOHAZ. EFSA Journal 2010; 8(4):1543).

However, at the time, the important data for farmed fish species other than Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) were still yet to be produced. The EFSA has set up criteria to consider other fishery products that originate from aquaculture. These criteria for farmed fish were introduced in the previously mentioned EU regulations in the revised Annex III, Section VIII, Chapter III of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004, Part D at Point 3. (d). The Aquaculture Advisory Council gave a recommendation in August 2020 for 're-evaluation of the risk assessment of parasites in farmed fish products'. This was based on the amount of scientific work on the subject and was also aimed at other farmed fish species. In this document, the AAC requested the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) to mandate the EFSA for a re-evaluation of the risk-assessment to confirm whether the risk of transmission of parasites to human by EU farmed fish is considered significant or negligible.

The EFSA has conducted a new risk assessment and approved and published a scientific opinion that is divided into two parts. It is a re-evaluation of certain aspects of the EFSA scientific opinion from April 2010 on the risk assessment of parasites in fishery products. It is based on new scientific data. Part 1¹ was adopted on 13 March 2024, and Part 2² was adopted on 23 October 2024.

II. Justification

The EFSA's reassessment of its 2010 scientific opinion on parasites in fishery products was published in 2024. It focused on wild-caught fish, new farming methods and effective killing methods. It found that closed aquaculture systems using heat-treated feed are free of zoonotic parasites, thus confirming the findings of a large body of scientific work.

Although the data are limited, the EFSA confirmed that surveillance data published since 2010 have shown no evidence of zoonotic parasite infections in numerous fish species. These include commercial-quality Atlantic salmon, marine rainbow trout, sea bream, turbot, meagre, Atlantic halibut, common carp and European catfish. Certain types of fish are almost certainly free of zoonotic parasites. These include fish that are produced in closed recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS) or flow-through systems with filtered water input and that are also fed exclusively with heat-treated feed.

Certain farm finfish are reared from embryos and fed exclusively on diets that are incapable of transmitting viable parasites that pose a health risk. In these cases, the aquaculture

¹ https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/8719?utm_source=chatgpt.com

² https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/9090?utm_source=chatgpt.com



operators routinely inspect their harvested fish for zoonotic parasites. Veterinary teams across the EU that have conducted these longstanding checks over several decades have consistently confirmed the complete absence of zoonotic parasites. This is fully in line with the findings of the EU-funded ParaFishControl project³.

The aquaculture fish production chain thus recognises the need for current EU legislation to subsequently evolve. The legislation must extend the exemption from freezing treatment for products intended for raw or undercooked consumption to all EU farmed fish products. This must occur under the conditions established by Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1276/2011.

III. Recommendations

AAC recommendation:

To the European Commission

Based on the re-evaluation adopted and published by the EFSA, the AAC calls the European Commission's Directorate General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) to update the current EU legislation. The proposed update should extend the exemption from the freezing treatment of products intended for raw or undercooked consumption to farmed species with production types for which the risk has been defined as negligible. This process should be carried out in accordance with the conditions established by Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1276/2011.

³ <https://www.parafishcontrol.eu/>



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