EU legislation & activities on welfare of farmed fish

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**EU legislation**

- Article 3: “Member States shall make provision to ensure that the owners or keepers take all reasonable steps to ensure the welfare of animals under their care and to ensure that those animals are not caused any unnecessary pain, suffering or injury”.
- Annex does not apply to fish.

**Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005** on the protection of animals during transport
- Welfare of animals is properly maintained
- Welfare conditions are regularly checked

**Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009** on the protection of animals at the time of killing.
- Article 3(1): "animals shall be spared any avoidable pain, distress or suffering during their killing and related operations".
- Annex does not apply to fish.
EU legislation (2)

Regulation (EU) 2018/848 on ORGANIC production and labelling of organic products

→ **Objective**: “application of high animal welfare standards and meet animals’ species specific behavioural needs”.

→ **Specific fish welfare requirements**
  
  o **Husbandry practice**: feeding, design of installations, stocking densities, and water quality must ensure that physiological and behavioural needs are met:
    
    o Maximum stocking density levels (species specific)
    o Restrictions to the use of artificial light
    o Restrictions to the use of oxygen
    o Prohibition of eyestalk ablation, ligation, incision and pinching
EU legislation (3)

- Design of feeding regimes – priority for animal welfare, reflect nutritional needs at various stages of development
- Specific characteristics for production-, containment systems/species
- Disease prevention keeping animals in optimal conditions: regular cleaning and disinfection of premises
- Anaesthesia for broodstock whenever necessary to minimise stress

- **Obligatory training** on health & welfare for aquaculture keepers

- **Transport:** ensure that fish welfare is maintained → cleaning and disinfection of tanks

- **Slaughter techniques:** make fish immediately unconscious and insensible to pain.
Other EU activities


2017: EU funded study on "Welfare of farmed fish: common practices during transport and at slaughter".

2018: Commission report on "the possibility of introducing certain requirements regarding the protection of fish at the time of killing" (March 2018).
   → Conclusions: MS are best positioned to regulate specificities according to species, production method, context, etc.
Other EU activities (2)

EU Platform on Animal Welfare → Own-Initiative Subgroup on Fish Welfare


Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) – Fish:

- “Strengthening fish welfare research through a gap analysis study” – November 2018
- “Disease prevention in farmed fish: new developments and research needs” November 2019

The Commission is facilitating the exchange of information and best practices on welfare of farmed fish via the Open Method of Coordination.
Other EU activities (3)

EU funded research on fish welfare.

- **AQUAFIRST** “Combined genetic and functional genomic approaches for stress and disease resistance marker assisted selection in fish and shellfish” (FP6).
- **FASTFISH** “On farm assessment of stress level in fish” (FP6).
- **EUROCARP** “Disease and Stress Resistant Common Carp: Combining Quantitative, Genomic and Proteomic and Immunological marker technologies to identify high performance strains, families and individuals” (FP6)
- **BENEFISH** “Evaluation and Modelling of Benefits and Costs of Fish Welfare-Interventions in European Aquaculture” (FP6).
- **COPEWELL** “A new integrative framework for the study of fish welfare based on the concepts of allostasis, appraisal and coping styles” (FP7).
- **WINFISH** “Welfare, Health and Individuality in Farmed fish” (FP7).
- **MedAID** “Mediterranean Aquaculture Integrated Development” (Horizon 2020).
Other EU activities (4)

**EU funded research** on fish welfare.

**Horizon 2020**

- **GAIN**: Green Aquaculture Intensification in Europe
- **Impaqt**: Intelligent management system for integrated multi-trophic aquaculture
- **AquaImpact**: Genomic and nutritional innovations for genetically superior farmed fish to improve efficiency in European aquaculture
- **NewTechAqua**: New Technologies, Tools and Strategies for a Sustainable, Resilient and Innovative European Aquaculture
- **iFISHiency**: Intelligent Fish feeding through Integration of ENabling technologies and Circular principle
- **FutureEU Aqua**: Future growth in sustainable, resilient and climate friendly organic and conventional European aquaculture
Recommendations/guidelines/opinions

EFSA’s Panel on Animal Health And Welfare (AHAW): Scientific Opinions related to fish welfare:

- General approach to fish welfare (2009)
- Stunning and killing methods (2009) – 7 species specific opinions: bluefin tuna, common carp, European eel, atlantic salmon, rainbow trout, European turbot, European seabass and gilthead seabream.

Council of Europe: Recommendation on the welfare of farmed fish (2005)


Industry guidelines on fish welfare.

Aquaculture Advisory Council: « fish welfare at slaughter »: report in 2017 and recommendation in 2019
Way forward

- The Commission will continue to **facilitate the exchange of information and best practices** on welfare of farmed fish via the Open Method of Coordination.

- The Commission is **reviewing the 2013 “Strategic Guidelines for the sustainable development of EU aquaculture”**
  - Welfare of farmed fish will be one of the issues to be addressed

- The Commission is **evaluating the "EU Strategy for the protection and welfare of animals 2012-2015"**
  - Study launched
Thank you for your attention