

Aquaculture animals: animal health requirements, prevention and control of certain diseases

2005/0153(CNS) - 24/10/2006 - Final act

PURPOSE: to update, recast and consolidate the animal health rules in relation to the trade in aquaculture products.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Council Directive 2006/88/EC on animal health requirements for aquaculture animals and products thereof, and on the prevention and control of certain diseases in aquatic animals.

BACKGROUND: in 2004, the European aquaculture industry was estimated to be worth more than EUR 2.5 billion. However, financial losses due to disease are estimated to be 20% of the production value. A reduction in diseases by 20% could equate into savings worth EUR 100 million per annum.

Previous Community aquaculture provisions served an EU consisting of twelve Member States only and focused essentially on the factors mostly affecting the industry of the then twelve, namely salmonid (trout and salmon) and oyster farming. That legislation was developed over two decades ago and it can no longer usefully support the EU's aquaculture industry.

CONTENT: the purpose of this Directive, therefore, is to introduce modern and targeted legislation, which seeks to address the most pressing issues facing aquaculture products across the Community today. Such an approach will allow the regulatory framework of the EU's aquaculture industry to meet 21st Century challenges as well as simplifying and modernising existing rules. EU regulatory provisions have been updated to reflect the broader range of aquaculture practises and species that are found in an expanded EU.

The new Directive takes account of significant developments in the industry, which have taken place in recent years. It also takes account of experience gained through 15 years of application of the present legislation, as well as scientific advances in this field. Moreover, the rules have been updated to bring the EU in line with international agreements and standards (like WTO/SPS and OIE).

In agreeing to the new Directive existing primary legislation has been repealed to be replaced by this one Council Directive. One intention of the new Directive is to generate greater flexibility and to delegate more operational responsibility to the Member States, thereby allowing local or regional authorities greater powers to prevent and contain aquatic diseases.

The Directive introduces the principle that aquatic animal diseases should receive the same treatment as terrestrial animal diseases. This obliges the Community to offer financial contributions under Community law in cases where a slaughter/eradication policy needs to be carried out. (see also CNS/2005/0154). In addition, the Directive allows for the application of more stringent rules where this is necessary for the protection of species from an environmental or conservation point of view. Thus, the Directive does not conflict with the EU Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. Indeed, it is hoped that a shift in policy towards Member State responsibility for disease will help overall conservation and environmental efforts.

More specifically speaking, the Directive sets out the following provisions:

- General requirements for production and processing, including authorisations and provisions relating to operations.
- Animal health provisions for placing aquatic animals and related products on the market.
- Animal health provisions for introducing third-country aquatic animals into the EU.
- Provisions for notification and control of certain diseases in aquatic animals.
- Control programmes and vaccinations.
- Provisions relating to a declaration of a 'disease free' status.
- Requirements relating to the relevant Member State authorities and laboratories.
- Technical requirements and guidelines specified in the Annexes.

TRANSPOSITION: Member States must adopt and publish by 1 May 2008 the laws, regulations and administrative provisions needed to comply with this Directive. They must comply with the Directive before 14 December 2008.

APPLY FROM: 1 August 2008.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 14 December 2006.