Aquaculture Conference

11 May 2012 in Salzburg

Opening Session

<u>Summary of topics</u>

- Introduction: Chateau Mondsee

- Austrian support of the objectives of the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) in the framework of aquaculture

- Joint Declarations (1st Declaration of 14 April 2011 and 2nd Declaration of 19 March 2012)
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- Austria's priorities

[Welcome]

- Ladies and Gentlemen, I am pleased to welcome you at the Aquaculture Conference in Mondsee today. Above all, I express my sincere thanks to Commissioner Maria Damanaki who offers us the opportunity to have an extensive discussion on the future of aquaculture here in Austria.

- It is a special pleasure for me to welcome you, Honourable Commissioner, and I would like to thank also Mister Stevenson and Mister Milana from the European Parliament for taking the time to participate in this Conference. Welcome on the Mondsee.

- I would like to thank also my colleagues from Slovenia and the Czech Republic for having accepted the invitation. I warmly welcome you, and I am pleased to welcome also the Finnish Secretary of State, the Croatian Vice Minister, the Slovak Secretary of State and the Secretary General of the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture.

- Fortunately, many representatives from European and Austrian politics, from the economy and from fisheries associations, experts and fish farmers as well as representatives of NGOs have come to the event. They will of course have the opportunity to participate actively in the discussions.

- The event location at Mondsee goes very well with the topic of our Conference. Originally, one of the oldest monasteries of the region was located here. The old Benedictine monks got whitefish and chars from the Mondsee fishermen and appreciated the high quality and value of these fish.

- We will talk about aquaculture today, about the strategies we need to follow to increase production and, above all, about the question of how we can achieve high quality while applying sustainable production methods.

[Austrian support of the objectives of the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) in the field of aquaculture]

- It is important to intensify cooperation in this field right now, at a time when the course for the future of fisheries and aquaculture is set. With the forthcoming reform of the CFP we want to strike a new path, reach a turning point and, in particular, strengthen the role of aquaculture. I am convinced that we can make a valuable contribution towards a future-oriented fisheries management and an expansion of the aquaculture sector.

- Strengthening aquaculture will help mitigate the problem of overfishing in particular if we succeed in using but very small amounts of fish food of marine origin. By strengthening traditional aquaculture we can reduce the EU's dependence on imports and secure jobs in coastal and rural areas. It is for this reason that I encourage measures to expand and to provide adequate support to aquaculture.

- We must be aware of the high social value of the reform. It is a matter of great concern to me to include social objectives in the CFP reform which comply with the tried and trusted European model of multifunctional agriculture which is called for again and again. We have to maintain and ensure vitality and health in all of Europe and offer European citizens good living conditions and sufficient job opportunities.

- However, the European Union should also meet its international responsibility to a higher extent. As the Austrian Minister of the Environment I therefore actively support the improvements in the external dimension of the CFP. By incorporating environmental and social standards into the EU's

bilateral agreements with third countries, sufficient attention should be paid to sustainability.

- We must tackle the topic of raising international standards to EU levels. The EU is frequently reproached for using standards only as a protective measure against unpleasant imports. However, especially in the fishery sector European enterprises have to meet high standards in respect of health, environment, quality and work.

- Austria also supports all of the European Commission's activities that help reduce overcapacities and stop discarding and illegal fishing.

- I therefore thank the European Commission for these reform proposals.

[Joint Declarations: 1st Declaration of 14 April 2011 and 2nd Declaration of 19 March 2012; reference to the Joint Statement]

- The declarations initiated by the Czech Republic and Austria point out the urgent need to strengthen European aquaculture. The first joint declaration of the landlocked countries addressed in particular problems of administrative and legal nature.

- The second joint declaration of 19 March 2012 emphasised, among other things, the important role of freshwater aquaculture and inland fisheries and the necessity of supporting aquaculture enterprises from the funds of the EMFF. Altogether 16 Member States support this declaration.

- It is evident what great importance Member States attach to aquaculture and how crucial it will be in the next few years to provide effective support to

this sector. Only with this support from the EMFF will we be in a position to achieve the objectives of the reform in aquaculture.

- I would be pleased if you, Honourable Commissioner, gave us some clarifying words to allay Member States' concerns today.

- I would like to mention also the Joint Statement which was prepared in the lead-up to the Conference and which is supported by 21 Member States. It highlights once again important issues linked to the promotion of freshwater aquaculture in the CFP. It will also be presented at the next Council meeting.

[Austria's priorities]

- It is important not only for Austria that sufficient funds from the EMFF are allocated to aquaculture. The sector can be expanded only if adequate funds are available.

- The existing funding framework covers traditional investments: investments in the construction of new as well as in the expansion and the modernisation of existing aquaculture installations. For Austria, these traditional investment grants account for 95% of the total amount of support.

- It is of utmost importance to maintain this possibility in the new EMFF. We welcome the funding opportunities for innovations and new technologies, but are also aware of the indispensable need for continuing the traditional investment support in the new EMFF. In this way we would make sure that production can be expanded also in small enterprises. Most of Austria's fish farms are small in size and would not be able to further expand their activities without this traditional financial aid.

- Austria's annual production of fish accounts for 3,100 tonnes, of which about 2,000 tonnes of trout and 800 tonnes of carp. The per-head consumption amounts to approximately 7.3 kg, the basis of calculation being filets, which definitely means a continuous increase in the demand for and the consumption of fish.

- With its very low annual production, Austria is but a small producer among EU countries in terms of quantity, but the quality of Austrian products is excellent and sustainable production practices are applied. It is therefore a special concern of mine to ensure that exactly those enterprises will be able to expand and to produce sustainably also in the future – the latter being a major component of our reform targets.

- In Austria, we start out from a growth potential of 80% in aquaculture. I take today's conference in Salzburg also as an opportunity to present an Austrian strategy entitled "AQUACULTURE 2020 - Austrian Strategy for the Promotion of National Fish Production". This strategy explains how the aforementioned potential can be exploited.

- The objective of "Aquaculture 2020 – Austrian Strategy for the Promotion of National Fish Production" is to increase domestic production from presently 3,100 tonnes to 5,500 tonnes by 2020. This ambitioned objective means a rise of production by almost 80% and an increase in the rate of self-sufficiency for freshwater fish from presently slightly below 35% to slightly above 60%.

- It is therefore also a matter of great concern to me that the reform will take special account of countries having a low funding volume, so we will be able to achieve our targets in terms of growth. Applying for support must pay off also for small-structured enterprises. These, but also other, enterprises must be relieved from part of the complicated administrative work.

- The effort involved should be in a reasonable relation to the amount of support. Alleviating the administrative burden for the small operational programmes is thus of great importance. As a consequence, programmes could be exploited in the best possible way and a contribution to the desired development towards sustainable aquaculture could be made.

- I would like to emphasise also the great importance of preserving biodiversity and fostering autochthonuous species. Biodiversity enriches our living environment with multifarious different facets and this should be the case also in the future. We should be grateful for that.

- I am firmly convinced that we are taking a promising direction in the reform which will lead us to a goal supported by producers just as much as by trade and consumers.

- Ladies and Gentlemen, I am looking forward to the hours to come and I am anxious to hear your contributions. Honourable Commissioner, I ask you to present your statements to us now.