Speech of the Mister of Agriculture of the Czech Republic Mr. Petr Bendl

at

"Common Fisheries Policy: Which future for Aquaculture?"

Salzburg, Austria, May 10 – 11, 2012

Ladies and gentlemen,

To start with, let me thank my Austrian counterpart - Nicolaus Berlakovich, the Austrian Minister of Agriculture - and Maria Damanaki, the European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries for organizing this conference on European aquaculture. This conference is a great opportunity to present the individual member states´ views and to exchange information at the time when we are about to finalize the preparatory phase of drafting legislation to support the Common fisheries policy. The Common fisheries policy underlines the role of aquaculture as an important producer of healthy and high quality food for the EU citizens. The growing demand for fish is Europe has been met primarily by fish imported from the third countries which often fail to reach the European quality standards and are not, unlike most of the European fish suppliers, produced friendly to the environment.

- The long term priorities envisaged by the Czech Republic as key for the EU have been the competitiveness of aquaculture hand in hand with its environment friendliness and the support of sustainable fishing.
- To meet these priorities, we will have to focus on innovations on all levels of the production chain as well as on active support of investments in fish-breeding facilities such as fish ponds, store-ponds, nurseries, and impoundments.
- In March, I initiated a declaration which was subsequently joined by sixteen colleagues of mine – representatives of Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Estonia, Finland, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Rumania, Greece, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain. In this declaration, I pointed at the needs of the aquaculture sector which should be satisfied to help this sector meet the objectives of the reformed Common fisheries policy.
- Development of fish-breeding facilities is not the only challenge here. The European aquaculture and waterways have been suffering from the outbreak of the migratory population of cormorants. We perceive this problem as a Europe-wide challenge. I thing that the EU should concentrate its own efforts and the efforts of the EU member states on reducing migratory population of cormorants to a sustainable size. I recommend proposing that the European Maritime and Fisheries fund also supported these efforts.

Let me now in brief comment on the content and implementation of methods to support aquaculture facilities in line with the draft Regulation.

- In the Czech Republic, we marked a big success with promotion of fish and fisheries and we intend to continue doing so in the future. That is why I welcome the fact that the draft Regulation contains provisions on promotion campaigns to raise awareness of products of fishing and aquaculture. I appreciate that there are no limitations as to the subject of promotion and the recipients of related subsidy.
- We need to enhance the financial stability of businesses in the aquaculture sector. I believe that supporting new forms of income will prove helpful. At the same time, I

expect that support offered to start-ups will be responded to positively by young experts in the field.

- Last but not least, the Czech Republic welcomes the initiative to support innovations. To boost competitiveness of aquaculture in the EU, we should support testing of innovations in production as well as investments to introduce innovations in this important sector. We should carefully consider, whether the fifty per cent public support of development and transfer of innovations is high enough to mark a real success.

I expect the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund to help decrease the administrative burden. For example, one can doubt the effectiveness of the use of small operational programmes´ financial tools in support of fish processing. I believe that financial allocations for the period of 2014 to 2020 will reflect the importance of the aquaculture sector, which produces tasty foodstuffs high in nutrition. I hope the importance of this sector will grow in the future.

Thank you very much for your attention. Let me invite you, madam Commissioner, and other colleagues, representatives of the EU member states, to AQUA 2012, an international conference organized by the European Aquaculture Society and the World Aquaculture Society in Prague in September 1 – 5, 2012. We will do our best to offer hospitality at least comparable to what we enjoyed here in Austria.