Animal welfare in EU aquaculture

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In response to the concerns raised by several citizens about animal welfare in fish farming, the European Commission would like to clarify that the health and welfare of farmed fish is important for EU aquaculture.

Only by ensuring that fish farmed in the EU are well treated through their life cycle can we ensure the high quality of EU aquaculture produce that reaches our tables. The new Common Fisheries Policy encourages an expansion of sustainable fish farming in the EU. Achieving this is in the hands of the Member States, in line with the requirements set out in EU and national law concerning animal welfare.

Animal welfare rules applicable to farmed fish covering their welfare during their growing, transport, and slaughter are laid down in Council Directive 98/58/EC, Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 and Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009. Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 on official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules provides the competent authorities in the Member States with the necessary tools and they may impose sanctions on holdings found to be in breach of legislative requirements.

The Commission has taken note of the recent opinions and media coverage related to the welfare of farmed fish and is continuing to monitor the situation. The Food and Veterinary Office of the Commission’s Health and Consumers Directorate General is planning a series of fact finding missions on aquaculture to a number of Member States in 2015. Animal welfare will be one of the topics addressed during these missions.

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