



FEDERATION OF VETERINARIANS OF EUROPE

## **“Caring for health and welfare of fish: A critical success factor for aquaculture”**

***Brussels, 16-17 May 2013***

### **Conference Conclusions**

- We need to acknowledge the extended diversity in fish species, in order to be in a position to propose and put in place sustainable and viable solutions for the future.
- Veterinarians are the experts in animal health and welfare, including fish. It is essential to ensure that sufficient veterinary expertise is available to the aquaculture sector. This will also ensure food safety and protect public health.
- Close collaboration between the aquaculture industry and the veterinary profession should be ensured, in order to ensure optimal health management of fish farms at all stages of production.
- Effective epidemiological monitoring is essential for the appropriate health management of fish-farms and shall be supported by the development of specific diagnostic tests. This will also underpin biosecurity of farms.
- Research on fish vaccines and antiparasitic medicines should be promoted.
- Research on alternative innovative non-medical treatments should be encouraged as well.
- Availability of veterinary medicines specific to fish must be ensured throughout Europe. Any review of the relevant legislation must ensure incentives and adequate return on investment to encourage the development of these medicines.
- Antibiotics for fish are POMs and must be prescribed by a veterinarian for the fish under his/her supervision.
- Industry and veterinarians should collaborate on best practices and vaccination programmes in order to prevent the development of antimicrobial resistance.
- Risk-based controls of animal movements should be enforced, particularly concerning imports from third countries, in order to avoid introduction of new pathogens that may threaten the health of local aquatic species.
- The EU is not self-sufficient in fish products, and requires imports from third countries. However, there is a significant potential in EU for increased production in aquaculture, both in terms of capacity and exploitation of new species. This growth should be encouraged and supported at national and EU levels.
- It is important not only to acknowledge the wide diversity of fish species, but also to encourage the growth of the different varieties of aquaculture. Research must be

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supported and targeted towards all the different species.

- The particular needs of aquatic organisms during their handling, transport or slaughter must be addressed by legislation.
- We call on the EU Commission to put more emphasis on fish welfare standards in the Commission's Animal Welfare Strategy.
- Veterinary schools should be encouraged to include in their curricula aquatic veterinary disciplines and/or training programmes, in order to ensure a high level of knowledge, skills, and competencies of the graduate. This is particularly important in EU countries where aquaculture is a significant food producing industry.
- Licensing of fish farms should be based on scientific knowledge and sustainable farming practices. To this end, state officials involved in this work must have adequate education and knowledge of the field.