Aquaculture: use of alien and locally absent species

2009/0153(COD) - 15/10/2009 - Initial legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to introduce amendments to Regulation (EC) No 708/2007 concerning use of alien and locally absent species in aquaculture.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Regulation.

BACKGROUND: the introduction of species beyond their natural range is expanding rapidly as a result of increased transport, trade, travel and tourism. Invasions by non-indigenous species are widely recognised as one of the main causes of global biodiversity loss. They can have adverse environmental, economic and social impacts. Alien species can act as vectors for novel diseases, alter ecosystems, compete with native species, etc.

Council Regulation (EC) No 708/2007 establishes a framework governing aquaculture practices in relation to alien and locally absent species to assess and minimise the possible impact of those species and of associated non-target species on aquatic habitats. It provides that introductions and translocations for use in closed aquaculture facilities may at a future date be exempted from the permit requirement of Chapter III of that Regulation, based on new scientific information and advice

Under the Sixth Framework Programme a concerted action was funded with the title "Environmental impacts of alien species in aquaculture" (the IMPASSE project). Its overall goal was to develop guidelines for environmentally sound practices for introductions and translocations in aquaculture.

The recently submitted final report on the IMPASSE project has delivered an operational definition of 'closed aquaculture facilities' for which the degree of risk associated with alien species could be reduced considerably, possibly to an acceptable level, if the potential for escape of target and non-target organisms is addressed during transportation and by well-defined protocols at the receiving facility. This means that introductions and translocations for use in such facilities could be exempted from the permit requirement under certain conditions.

The aim is to remove the red tape associated with the permit procedure for those closed aquaculture facilities which can be considered as bio-secure and would be interested in farming "alien or locally absent" aquatic species.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT: the results of the IMPASSE project regarding closed aquaculture facilities were presented within the Management Committee for Fisheries and Aquaculture and a large number of Member States were in favour of improving the current definition in order to allow the said exemption. Therefore, the present proposal amending Council Regulation 708/2007 was prepared. Its aim is to remove the red tape associated with the permit procedure for those 'closed aquaculture facilities' which can be considered as biosecure. The proposed modification does not represent a major or substantial change to the Regulation. A specific Impact Assessment addressing this limited modification of the Regulation would not therefore provide any added value as it represents just an executive decision on a technical issue with marginal consequences. It would not be proportionate to invest additional effort and time in carrying out a formal Impact Assessment.

CONTENT: this proposal falls within the ambit of the Common Fisheries Policy, which is the exclusive competence of the Community. It provides that, according to Council Regulation 708/2007, introductions

and translocations for use in 'close aquaculture facilities' may at a future date be exempted from the permit requirement of Chapter III of the Regulation, based on new scientific information and advice.

The proposed action aims to **exempt biosecure 'closed aquaculture facilities' from the permit requirement** of Chapter III of the Regulation. Taking into account the scientific advice, the proposal includes modification of the current definition of 'closed aquaculture facility', adding the appropriate characteristics to guarantee that such facilities do not allow the escape of target and non-target organisms to the wild environment.

In addition, a new provision regarding the **transport of alien and locally absent species to 'closed aquaculture facilities' is included**. Consequently, the Member States shall set up a list of closed aquaculture facilities. This list shall be published and regularly updated on a website which has been created under Commission Regulation (EC) No 535/2008. Some articles and Annex I are amended accordingly to reflect the new provisions.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS: the proposal has no implications for the Community budget.