Aquaculture: protection of the aquatic environment from the risks associated with the use of alien and locally absent species

2006/0056(CNS) - 03/10/2006

The committee adopted the report by its chairman, Philippe MORILLON (ALDE, FR) broadly approving the proposed regulation concerning use of alien and locally absent species in aquaculture, subject to a number of amendments under the consultation procedure:

- a new recital stressed that aquaculture "is not the only source of potential dissemination of alien species in the aquatic medium" and said that a comprehensive approach should be applied to this issue, taking into account the risks associated with other activities such as the use of ballast water and trade in ornamental fish;

- the regulation should not apply to "species which have commonly been used in aquaculture for more than 30 years and for which escape to the wild has been proven not to represent an environmental hazard". The committee argued that some originally non-indigenous species (e.g. the rainbow trout, Pacific oyster and carp) are now very widespread and traditionally used in Community aquaculture. The Commission should establish a list of species to which the regulation would not apply, on the basis of the scientific data available;

- the regulation should take into account the fact that closed aquaculture facilities present a lower risk of escape;

- the maximum duration of permits should be extended from 5 years, as proposed by the Commission, to 7 years in order to take account of the reproductive cycle of some species and the time needed to recoup the investment required;

- the deadline for decisions to grant or refuse permits should be shortened from one year (which the committee felt was unreasonably long) to 6 months;

- the regulation should allow several competent authorities and advisory committees to co-exist at national level where this arrangement best suits the institutional structure of a Member State;

- there should be an adequate transition period (12 months) between the entry into force and the implementation of the regulation.