

Mr Virginijus SINKEVIČIUS
Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
B-1049 Brussels

Dear Commissioner,

I commend the European Commission's recently announced package of measures adopted to support Member States' economies during the pandemic. I further welcome the Commission's efforts to resolve pressing issues confronted by the aquaculture sector. However, after consulting with relevant parties, I feel obliged to reiterate priorities and make specific arguments in support of certain points that need rectifications or amendments.

All European aquaculture is severely impacted by the public health emergency related to the coronavirus. The overall negative effects are expected to be devastating. The fish farming sector is experiencing such an unexpected fall into crisis that is compromising its present and future existence. In response to the Commission's announcement, it must be noted that it is not the reduction of production that is a concern, but rather a loss of income. The main direct impacts are revenue reduction and overstocked biomass. It is worth considering supplementing the EMFF funds available. Additionally, the current percentage of Member States financing (25%) could be raised to allow them to increase the volume of direct aid.

Furthermore, since there is no compulsory condition for a Producer Organisation to sell the production of its members, the Commission's proposal should look also to farmers' associations, which are not organised as co-operatives, but still are fulfilling the provisions of Article 8 regarding the objectives of POs. These professional organisations are still depending on the economic status of their members through the monthly contribution they receive for functioning purposes. It is neither in the Commission's, nor in the fish farmers' interests that a serious price crisis ensues, once the emergency situation passes. Aquaculture needs a pragmatic temporal frame of support.



Ultimately, due to social distancing and other health-related measures imposed by member states, there is a dramatic drop in demand both for market-sized fish and for stocking material. Pond fish farmers have to deal with longer live storage periods, forcing upon them with costs and losses. Pond fish farmers are stocking the market size fish (e.g. carps) in special storage ponds in order to ensure a stable offer to the market during periods where there is a demand (November – April). This storage comes with additional costs and losses. The drop in demand will force farmers to overstock the growing ponds with additional losses and costs. This specificity must be properly addressed and a tailored assistance is imperative.

Consequently, I urge you to consider the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak and the intense requests made by all stakeholders to amend the EMFF modifications. These re-evaluations will still respect environmental guidelines and enable European aquaculture to negate the most devastating dangers they now confront.

Yours sincerely,

Carmen AVRAM

Member of the European Parliament

Substitute member of the Committee on Fisheries