

## GUIDANCE ON DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE AQUACULTURE

### Background

Cefas (the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science) in the United Kingdom, has been contracted by the European Commission (DG ENV in cooperation with DG MARE) to deliver the project “Background information for sustainable aquaculture development addressing in particular environmental protection”. The overall objective of the project is to provide support for the development of guidance documentation for the implementation of environmental legislation (and especially the Water Framework Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive) in the context of the development of sustainable aquaculture. This guidance documentation will outline how best to manage the environmental impact of aquaculture activities, and to support the potential realisation of mutual benefits between aquaculture development and environmental protection. The work will draw on the experiences of policy-makers, regulators, industry and NGOs right across the EU-28.

Aquaculture has been growing at 6.9% p.a. globally, but in the EU this level of growth has not been achieved, with production remaining at the same level since at least 2000. Under the Common Fisheries Policy Reform, the European Commission is seeking to promote the expansion of the aquaculture sector, and has published a Communication on Strategic Guidelines for the sustainable development of the industry<sup>1</sup>. Those Strategic Guidelines highlight four priority areas for improvement: reducing administrative burdens; improving access to space and water; increasing competitiveness; exploiting competitive advantages due to high quality, health and environmental standards. On the basis of these guidelines, Member States are now elaborating multiannual national plans for the development of sustainable aquaculture. In this context, it is necessary to find the most effective way to achieve food security and economic development, while minimising negative environmental impacts. As a young and diverse industry, there is a very real need for knowledge exchange across the industry-academia-government axis to inform the decision-making process in policy units at EU and Member State level.

### Good-practice workshops

In order to facilitate that knowledge exchange, four two-day good-practice workshops will be organised in each of the marine regions (North East Atlantic, Mediterranean, Baltic, Black Sea/Danube) over the period March to May 2014. The purpose of these workshops is to bring together relevant stakeholders so as to build up a clear picture of activities taking place on the ground, and to discuss the opportunities and challenges presented by the current legislative framework (WFD and MSFD in particular). The workshops will also provide a forum to determine criteria for what “good practice” means in the context of sustainable aquaculture. As an output from these workshops, documents will be produced outlining these good practice criteria and summarising the experiences shared.

It is envisaged that the workshops would be organised in cooperation with voluntary Member State hosts from each marine region who would provide some support to Cefas in relation to securing a venue and suggesting relevant speakers. Expected participation would be approximately 80-100 participants, made up of policymakers at national, regional sea and European level, as well as representatives of industry and the NGO community at the appropriate level.

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2013) 229 final:

[http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/aquaculture/official\\_documents/com\\_2013\\_229\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/aquaculture/official_documents/com_2013_229_en.pdf)

### Opening and closing guidance workshops

In order to support the project and to ensure that the guidance documentation which results from it is “fit for purpose”, two additional workshops will be held in Brussels towards the beginning and end of the project. The first of these workshops is tentatively planned for Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> February, in Brussels. At that workshop the project team plans to do several things:

- 1) Introduce the project in more detail;
- 2) Provide a summary on their desk research carried out to date;
- 3) Seek feedback from the audience on the proposed direction of the work;
- 4) Extract comment from delegates on their own experiences in relation to the subject area;
- 5) Summarise a proposed way forward with the project.

The target audience will be Member State experts charged with implementing the environmental legislation in question (i.e. the Marine Strategy Coordination Group for the MSFD and the Strategic Coordination Group for the WFD) and Member State experts responsible for the development of the aquaculture sector (e.g. from fisheries ministries), as well as other relevant aquaculture experts. Approximately 50-60 participants are foreseen for this workshop. We would thus invite Member States to arrange internally to send a maximum of 2 representatives to this meeting in order to provide comment and input into the work; if possible, we would encourage Member States to ensure that the relevant national administrations responsible for environment and aquaculture are equally represented (e.g. one representative from the environment ministry and one from the fisheries/agriculture ministry). We also consider that it would be useful for the experts involved in the elaboration of the Multiannual National Plans for the development of sustainable aquaculture to be present, if possible. A second workshop involving the same group of people will be held before the summer break in order to take stock of what was learned at the regional workshops and to provide further input before the final stages of drafting the guidance documentation.