



Resolution 1208 (1999)¹

Challenges, advantages and development of extensive aquaculture

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly has always taken an interest in food security questions, including problems concerning fishing, an activity that is important not only in terms of food but also for social and economic reasons.
2. It is now clear that the growing demand for a comparatively cheap resource such as fish has led to an over-exploitation of stocks which is in the process of exhausting them by jeopardising their renewal.
3. It has also been acknowledged that aquaculture is potentially able to provide a partial solution to these problems, both quantitatively by ultimately making good the food deficit and qualitatively by enabling natural populations to be preserved. It must be noted, however, that although aquaculture offers promising prospects and has undergone considerable expansion over the past ten years (averaging an annual growth rate of 10% and accounting for 25% of total production), this sector is still suffering from a lack of knowledge and investment, particularly as far as extensive aquaculture is concerned. The fact is that the image of extensive aquaculture, which is a more environment-friendly activity capable of producing more natural kinds of food, could be enhanced.
4. The Assembly is convinced that it would be fully in the interests of public authorities to increase their support for aquaculture and for the diversification of production systems, especially with regard to species of high commercial value. Europe currently has a deficit of fishery products (8 billion euros in 1998 for the European Union alone) and is a net importer to the tune of more than 20 billion euros.
5. It may be observed, however, that extensive aquaculture is still encountering difficulties that impede its development, particularly as regards vagile (non-sedentary) species, and chiefly in two fields: technical restrictions (notably with regard to livestock breeding and feeding) and legal regulations (above all with regard to livestock ownership arrangements and conflicts due to competing uses of the maritime area).
6. Public authorities, whether national or European, have an important part to play in the development of knowledge permitting improved planning as well as rationalisation and optimisation of extensive aquaculture systems (ecology, zootechnics, economics, law, halieutics). Large-scale research programmes of an integrated and pluridisciplinary nature are needed, and the requisite substantial funds can be raised only by the public sector, which can also provide a guarantee of the neutrality and public interest of such research.
7. Among the problems still hindering the development of aquaculture, emphasis should be placed on the unavailability of inshore sites for the establishment of new farms as well as the competition with other already-established or traditional uses (fishing, tourism, protected areas, and so on). These conflicts are indicative of the inadequacy of the present methods of allocating the marine area between competing uses.
8. With regard to the ownership of stocks, problems arise when it comes to replacing public financing and exploitation systems with private ones (whether individual or corporate). With regard to extensive fish farming, private ownership and exploitation are still the exception. Privatisation of stocks may thus be seen as a decisive factor, but it requires some preliminary clarification regarding systems for regulating access to the resource and arrangements for allocating and exchanging rights.

1. See [Doc. 8464](#), report of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, rapporteur: Mr González Laxe. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 4 November 1999.



9. The new conditions of access to natural resources (new regulatory arrangements) call for an institutional reform, which may be expected to encounter different obstacles. The Assembly is convinced of the priority need for such a reform, which it regards as part of the political process and dependent upon official action.

10. Accordingly, the Assembly invites member states and the European Union:

10.1. to rationalise extensive farming systems by making a single authority responsible for fisheries, the management of natural resources (in particular, adjustment between the volume of the biomass and the capacity of aquacultural ecosystems), the development of exclusivity regimes and the rationalisation of uses;

10.2. to adapt national and community legislation so as to clarify exclusivity systems by clearly distinguishing functions connected with the ownership of natural resources from those relating to rights of use, for which economic allocation arrangements are proving more effective;

10.3. to improve the regulation of access to fisheries, the legal status of stocks and the plundering of stocks by external fishermen, as well as ensure a better match between public costs and private earnings;

10.4. to envisage the introduction of fish resource privatisation schemes and study the merits of the various ownership arrangements (public, corporate or individual), embodying them in legislation, if appropriate;

10.5. to increase the effectiveness of official action by decentralising the management and planning of fisheries at both national and community levels;

10.6. to create, for that purpose, independent public agencies supervised by authorities comprising representatives of responsible administrations and users' groups and responsible for evaluating resources, allocating rights of use, monitoring the exercise thereof and financing natural resource enhancement programmes;

10.7. to include the regulation of aquaculture systems and the conservation of the environment in the study of the reform of fishery regulation arrangements;

10.8. to instruct the competent national research centres to initiate studies with a view to demonstrating the ecological and technical feasibility of extensive aquaculture as well as its economic advantages, and in particular:

a. to carry out pluridisciplinary research programmes concerning the development of extensive aquaculture, with particular reference to the diversification of sedentary species and the collective exploitation of vagile species, while giving priority to species of greater commercial value;

b. to develop research in such fields as systems for regulating marine populations (ecology of juveniles, breeding strategies, and so on), the planning of fisheries, the domestication of living resources (choice of stocks, homing behaviour, and so on), measures to combat the colonisation of exotic species (hybridisation, risks to wild populations) and the conservation of the environment (pollution, health hazards, and so on);

11. The Assembly also invites the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and its Committee on Fisheries, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and its Fisheries Committee, and the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) to take note of its proposals, study them, and launch research programmes with a view to permitting the development of extensive aquaculture and contributing to that of the fisheries sector in general.