

Opinion on the proposal for a Council Directive introducing Community measures for the control of certain fish diseases

(93/C 19/05)

On 2 July 1992, the Council decided to consult the Economic and Social Committee in accordance with Article 198 of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community on the abovementioned proposal.

The Section for Agriculture and Fisheries, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its Opinion on 3 November 1992. The Rapporteur was Mr Wick.

At its 301st Plenary Session held on 24/25 November 1992 (meeting of 24 November 1992) the Economic and Social Committee unanimously adopted the following Opinion.

1. The Committee welcomes the draft Directive, which is intended to limit the impact and the spread of certain fish diseases.

2. General comments

2.1. In aquaculture large numbers of fish are confined in a small quantity of water and outbreaks of certain diseases affecting fish can therefore quickly assume epizootic proportions. This can mean that the entire population of a fish farm soon becomes infected and substantial losses ensue.

2.2. However, the natural conditions make it much more difficult to control fish diseases than to control animal diseases in livestock farming.

2.3. The Committee accordingly considers it necessary for these fish diseases to be brought under control very quickly, as the economic existence of the farms would otherwise be severely jeopardized.

2.4. As fish are traded both within and outside the Community, uniform control measures for these diseases are required at least at Community level. The Committee also considers contacts with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries to be desirable.

2.5. The Committee welcomes the fact that particularly infectious diseases are to be eradicated within the Community.

2.6. Diseases which are prevalent in the Community are to be eradicated in areas and farms which are officially recognized as being disease-free, and promptly controlled in other farms.

2.7. The Committee welcomes a non-vaccination policy, as, when fish are vaccinated, the danger of vaccines being released into the water and infecting other fish cannot be entirely ruled out.

2.8. The Committee would point out that derogations from the non-vaccination policy can be dangerous and should be subject to very strict safety precautions and scientific safeguards.

2.9. The Committee welcomes the fact that the diagnosis of diseases within the Community is to be harmonized and carried out only by approved laboratories. It also welcomes the fact that these tasks are to be coordinated by a reference laboratory.

2.10. The Committee would point out that there must be sufficient testing laboratories to enable final diagnoses to be reached very quickly, so that the further spread of diseases can be prevented where an outbreak is suspected. Sufficient qualified staff must also be available.

2.11. The Committee calls on the Commission to table statistics on the economic importance of aquaculture and its role in the fishery industry as a whole.

2.12. The Committee notes that the draft Directive is a logical follow-up to the Council Directive of 28 January 1991 concerning the animal health conditions governing the placing on the market of aquaculture animals and products. It refers to its Opinion of 19 September 1990⁽¹⁾.

2.13. The Committee also refers to its Opinion⁽²⁾ on the proposal for a Council Decision introducing a Community financial measure for the eradication of Infectious Haematopoietic Necrosis (IHN) of salmonids in the Community [COM(89) 502 final].

⁽¹⁾ OJ No C 332, 31. 12. 1990, p. 105.

⁽²⁾ OJ No C 124, 21. 5. 1990, p. 3.

2.14. The Committee urges the Commission to provide financial assistance for the necessary eradication programmes.

2.15. The Committee calls for a scientific study to collate the knowledge available in the Community concerning the transmission and spreading of fish diseases, including knowledge of disease-resistant fish. The results of the study should provide the basis for promoting future scientific research into fish diseases.

2.16. The Committee notes that the Commission is assisted by an advisory committee whose remit includes aquaculture. The Committee considers it important for all economic and social partners involved in aquaculture to be represented on that committee.

2.17. The Committee would point out that the Commission proposal does not consistently refer to gametes as well as fish and eggs. To avoid misunderstandings, all references to fish and eggs should also refer to gametes.

2.18. The various language versions of certain Articles of the Commission proposal (in particular Articles 5, 10 and 13) should be aligned.

3. Specific comments

3.1. Article 1

The Committee notes that the Commission proposal is confined to measures for the control of certain fish diseases and does not cover molluscs. The Committee calls for corresponding measures for molluscs to be adopted in a separate directive as soon as possible.

3.2. Article 2

This Article should be supplemented by the definitions laid down in Article 2 of the Council Directive of 28 January 1991 concerning the animal health conditions governing the placing on the market of aquaculture animals and products, as these definitions are frequently referred to in this Directive.

3.3. Article 2(3)

The Committee proposes the following wording:

'Fish suspected of being infected:

Fish showing clinical signs, post-mortem lesions and positive reactions in laboratory tests indicating the possible presence of a List I or II disease.'

This wording makes it clear that suspicion of infection is based on more than just supposition.

3.4. Article 3

The beginning of the Article should read as follows:

'All farms rearing, keeping or catching fish'

In respect of List I diseases, it is important to include enterprises which only catch wild fish from rivers, lakes or the sea, which may nevertheless be infected or act as carriers; otherwise it is not possible to implement the measures referred to in Article 6(1)(c).

3.5. Article 3(2)

This amendment does not affect the English text.

3.6. Article 4

Paragraph 2 should mention the fact that Article 5 applies only to List I fish diseases.

3.7. Article 8(2)

The Committee considers it inappropriate to exclude fish species which are not carriers of disease, and accordingly proposes that this paragraph be deleted.

3.8. Article 10(3)

It should be stated here that measures must be taken to ensure that during transport no agents of the disease can escape from the means of transport.

3.9. Article 13(1)

It should be stated here that vaccination with live vaccine is prohibited.

3.10. Article 15

The Committee notes that the Standing Veterinary Committee procedure proposed is fundamentally different from the procedure hitherto used in animal health arrangements. It precludes political influence on the fixing of individual measures.

As hitherto, the Member States should have a say in such matters. However, the proposed procedure provides only for the Member States to be heard. The Committee accordingly considers it necessary for decisions to be taken by the Council, or at least by the Standing Veterinary Committee, in line with the current procedure.

3.11. *Annex*

Annex A to the Council Directive of 28 January 1991 concerning the animal health conditions governing the

placing on the market of aquaculture animals and products should be included among the annexes, as this Directive contains frequent references to the fish diseases listed in that Annex.

Done at Brussels, 24 November 1992.

*The Chairman
of the Economic and Social Committee*

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Opinion on the proposal for a Council Directive amending Directive 90/679/EEC on the Protection of Workers from Risks Related to Exposure to Biological Agents at Work⁽¹⁾

(93/C 19/06)

On 10 August 1992 the Council decided to consult the Economic and Social Committee, under Article 118a of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, on the abovementioned proposal.

The Section for Social, Family, Educational and Cultural Affairs, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its Opinion on 19 November 1992. The Rapporteur was Mr Etty.

At its 301st Plenary Session (meeting of 24 November 1992), the Economic and Social Committee adopted the following Opinion unanimously.

1. Introductory remarks

1.1. This draft Directive is amending Directive 90/679/EEC on the protection of workers from risks to exposure to biological agents at work. The latter Directive was one of the individual Directives under the 'framework' Directive 89/391/EEC on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work. The Committee gave an Opinion on the draft for Directive 90/679/EEC in December 1988.

1.2. The present draft amendment to Directive 90/679/EEC was already announced in the text of the Directive. Article 18 of this instrument says that within six months of the date of implementation of the Directive a first list of group 2, group 3 and group 4 biological agents shall be adopted by Council, i.e. by 28 May 1994.

1.3. Annex III in Directive 90/679/EEC was reserved for the list of bacteria, viruses, parasites, and fungi presented by the Commission, together with notes on the application of the scheme.

1.4. In its Opinion of December 1988 the Committee did not make observations pertaining to the relevant parts of the draft of Directive 90/679/EEC.

⁽¹⁾ OJ No C 217, 24. 8. 1992, p. 32.