

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003011/26  
to the Commission  
Francisco José Millán Mon (PPE), Gabriel Mato (PPE)  
(16 July 2026)**

*Subject:* Future EU approaches to farmed fish welfare

The Commission has recently acknowledged the lack of harmonised welfare rules for aquatic animals in the EU <sup>(1)</sup>. At the same time, ongoing work through the European Union Reference Centre for Animal Welfare for Aquatic Animals (EURCAW Aqua) and other scientific initiatives continues to advance technical knowledge on fish welfare indicators and assessment systems.

In recent years, collaborative initiatives in several EU countries involving aquaculture stakeholders, scientists and other relevant actors have developed practical welfare guidelines <sup>(2)</sup> and assessment tools for farmed fish. In Spain and Greece for example, multi-stakeholder welfare guidelines have provided valuable technical experience that could help inform future EU approaches in this field.

We acknowledge that welfare needs vary across individual species, production systems and farm sizes. With this in mind:

1. How does the Commission intend to take into account existing scientific and technical developments, including the welfare guidelines, indicators and assessment tools developed in recent years, when shaping future EU approaches to aquatic animal welfare?
2. Does the Commission envisage further work towards the development and harmonisation of species-specific welfare indicators and welfare assessment criteria for farmed fish across the EU?
3. How will the Commission ensure that future trade relations with third countries do not disadvantage EU producers already investing in higher welfare standards?

Submitted: 16.7.2026

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission  
(24 August 2026)**

The Commission is focusing on improved implementation of the rules applicable to aquatic animals <sup>(1)</sup>. The EU Reference Centre for Animal Welfare on aquatic animals supports Member States in carrying out official controls and work on animal welfare assessments.

An external ongoing study on animal welfare indicators aims to develop a cohesive set of operational animal welfare indicators, with consensus from stakeholders.

These indicators could be used to monitor animal welfare at farm, transport and slaughter and may be used for policy formulation, evaluation or operators' own use. In addition, the European Partnership on Animal Health and Welfare (EUPAHW) <sup>(2)</sup>, is advancing technologies and methods to improve animal welfare.

'Good Husbandry Practices for aquaculture' <sup>(3)</sup> and a 'Code of good practices on fish welfare and fish welfare indicators' <sup>(4)</sup> were developed, implementing the 'Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030' <sup>(5)</sup>. The future policy agenda for aquaculture will continue action on aquatic animal welfare.

Animal welfare is reflected in the EU's trade policy, through dialogues and cooperation with trading partners, and where applicable animal-welfare related import requirements in full respect of EU's international obligations.

In its recent trade agreements, the EU has sought to include discipline on trade and sustainable management aquaculture, under which each Party commits to promoting the development of sustainable and responsible aquaculture, including in accordance with the Food and Organisation's Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/news/details/164>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://apromar.es/guia-bienestar/>.

<sup>(1)</sup> Council Directive 98/58/EC (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/1998/58/oj/eng>), Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2005/1/oj/eng>) and Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2009/1099/oj/eng>).

<sup>(2)</sup> <https://www.eupahw.eu/>.

<sup>(3)</sup> <https://aquaculture.ec.europa.eu/key-documents/good-husbandry-practices>.

<sup>(4)</sup> <https://aquaculture.ec.europa.eu/key-documents/code-good-practices-fish-welfare-and-fish-welfare-indicators>

<sup>(5)</sup> COM/2021/236 final (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2021:236:FIN>).

The Commission will continue to assess the potential impacts of future initiatives on the competitiveness of the EU aquaculture sector.

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