



FEDERATION OF  
EUROPEAN  
AQUACULTURE  
PRODUCERS

## Position of the FEAP on Antimicrobial resistance

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR), including antibiotic resistance, is the resistance of a microbe to an antimicrobial medication that used to be effective in treating or preventing an infection caused by that microbe.

It is recognised that antimicrobial resistance poses a serious risk to both human and animal health, since resistant bacteria can be transferred between animals, animal products and people. The World Health Organisation has warned of a post-antibiotic era, where antibiotic resistance would cause more deaths than cancer. The European Commission sees this risk as a major priority by in its political agenda on food safety and has also been highlighted by the European Parliament's recent work on veterinary medicines. Preventive and innovative actions are being proposed to address the concerns raised by antimicrobial resistance.

The Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP) unites 26 national associations of 22 European countries and continuously supports and promotes the responsible development of the European aquaculture sector. Aquaculture is recognised as being one of the most efficient solutions to feed a growing global population and now provides more fish for food than fisheries. FEAP represents a range of different farmed fish species, including trout, salmon, carp, sea bass, sea bream, turbot, cod and many other new emerging interests. In aquaculture - the farming of fish - health and welfare are of prime importance, as much as the water and environment in which they are raised.

### Healthy animals produce safer food.

Consumers in the EU and beyond should have access to the finest and safest European farmed fish products on the market. Therefore, European fish farmers and their veterinarians continue to work in concert to develop Veterinary Health Plans, optimised global surveillance and monitoring programmes. No fish farmer wishes to lower growth performance and lose fish through disease and infections. The FEAP strongly supports the improvement of veterinary skills and networking throughout Europe so as to improve and access best on-farm practices.

Antibiotics are used to treat farmed and pet animals for the same reasons as they are used to treat people: they are selectively used to treat and control specific diseases. Responsible prescription and use of antibiotics in all types of food producing animals, including fish, is a key consideration.

The focus for professional fish farming is on **disease prevention** rather than cure: antibiotics are therefore not used unless considered to be essential for disease treatment. The prophylactic use of antibiotics does not occur. Use of good husbandry practices and associate biosecurity measures are thus a priority for fish farmers to assure high levels of health and welfare.

Vaccination at the freshwater stage of the farmed salmon cycle, before fish are exposed to the more open marine environment, has reduced antimicrobial usage at sea to a minimum. Vaccine development for existing and emerging diseases needs to be encouraged.

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The use of selective breeding technologies for disease resistance provides another option, but remains as a longer-term challenge to be resolved.

Emerging bacterial syndromes may require the use of antibiotics until vaccines can be developed. However, few new or alternative medicinal treatments are being discovered, so it is vital for the sector to retain the effectiveness of present antibiotic medicines for the future.

In respect of the presence of antibiotic residues in the environment, as pointed out above, high quality water is of primary importance for the growth and health performance of the fish. Any water treatment is an additional cost for the fish farmers who will therefore avoid, as much as possible any potential residues.

Innovative measures and developments are evident requirements to assure fish health and welfare in the future and research into new medicines and treatments is needed urgently. The therapeutic reserve for veterinarians to be able to treat infections is very limited, due particularly to the marketing authorisation procedures existing in Europe. The FEAP supports the proposal to decouple the veterinary procedures from those of medicines for humans.

The FEAP is well aware of the imminent dangers to fish and shellfish aquaculture posed by climate change and ocean acidification, complicated by new and emerging diseases. New European projects, 'Climefish' and 'Ceres', will examine these aspects in detail. These efforts should lead to new innovative proposals for on-farm best management practices.

The FEAP therefore looks forward to the results of the current revision of the legislation concerning veterinary medicines and medicated feeds that may improve both availability and efficiency of use. These reviews should contribute to increasing the health and welfare of millions of fish that, at present, are potentially placed at risk and hopefully limit the risk of antibiotic resistance developing.

The FEAP strongly promotes the conditions for a 'level playing field' for European aquaculture and believes that such EU rules on farming processes and responsibilities should be applied to farming activities in third countries that supply fish and fish products to the European consumer market. EU producers should not be put at a disadvantage in this respect.

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*The Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP) is the united voice of the European aquaculture production industry, being the federation of 26 national associations of 22 European countries, representing over 2 million tons of productions, an ex-farm value of more than 8 billion Euros and 100,000 direct jobs in coastal and rural areas.*

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