

POSITION PAPER

On making GRANTS available in the EMFF 2021-2027 for PRODUCTIVE AQUACULTURE INVESTMENTS

23 October 2020

Background

The European Commission presented on June 2018 its Proposal for a Regulation on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) and repealing Regulation (EU) 1301/2014¹.

This proposal stated in its article 15.3 (on Aquaculture) that Productive aquaculture investments may only be supported through the financial instruments provided for in Article 32 of Regulation (EU) No [Regulation laying down Common Provisions] and through InvestEU, in accordance Article 33 of that Regulation.

The Commission's proposal has been passed over to the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union and it is currently undergoing the trilogue process. The adoption of the next Regulation on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund is expected for the end of 2020 or beginning of 2021.

General comments

The Federation of European Aquaculture Producers is firmly convinced that the successive structural fund schemes dedicated to EU's maritime and fishery policies (like the current EMFF) have been successful in the modernisation and improvement of the production capacity of European aquaculture farms (regardless of the current stagnation of European union aquaculture production). This has been possible in great length thanks to the availability of EMFF grants to co-finance productive investments in aquaculture.

Aquaculture in the European Union is built upon microenterprises and SMEs, the majority being small family businesses. Over the fishery fund periods of 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 the national and regional competent public authorities have developed a certain capacity to manage calls for aquaculture grants, and aquaculture SMEs have learnt to request and use those grants efficiently.

Financial instruments to promote investments in productive aquaculture already exist in the current EMFF (2014-2020) but there are hardly any experiences of their use in any Member State because these instruments are complex to implement. Current interest rates in the European Union, and those foreseen for the next years, with rates at zero or even negative levels, make financial instruments unattractive and providing little advantages over direct access of undertakings to the banking markets. Furthermore, aquaculture is considered by financial institutions as a high-risk activity making access to

¹ COM(2018) 398 final <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2018/1013/oj>