FEDERATION OF EUROPEAN AQUACULTURE PRODUCERS

Factsheet

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SEALICE

Background

Norway, Scotland and Ireland have important populations of wild salmon and a significant aquaculture industry. It is important to preserve wild salmon and at the same time develop the potential of aquaculture food production.

Salmon lice - a species of copepod that is ectoparasite on fish - exist naturally in salt water, and can be transmitted from wild fish to farmed fish and vice versa. Larger amounts of adult salmon lice on salmon can lead to sores and injury, and thereby constitute both animal health and welfare challenges. However, it is only in exceptional cases that salmon lice cause problems in the aquaculture industry.

At the time being there are some disagreement about the salmon lice' impact on different populations of wild salmon and sea trout. However, large amounts of lice, bring the same health challenges as in aquaculture.

Salmon lice can also affect the farmed fish's wellbeing and growth and subsequently the profit for the aquaculture industry. Therefore, it's in the industry's interest to keep the number of salmon lice in aquaculture at acceptable levels (see original fact sheet Sjømat Norge - Norwegian Seafood federation).

However, a too strict regulation of the salmon sea lice level in aquaculture may have negative effects on the fish welfare, A low acceptance level for sealice will cause an increase frequency of treatments of the fish, which is stressful and may lead to wound injuries. The regulation of sea lice should be balanced by the interesse of wild salmon and the salmon in aquaculture.

There are substantial projects being undertaken on production and use of cleaner fish, fishes that eat the sealice, as a biological control measure. Increased use of biological and mechanical removal of sea lice have reduced the need for therapeutic control of the parasite.

Challenges

- There is a need of sound science-based facts explaining what sea lice actually mean for populations (geographically distinct populations, and not overall populations as such) of wild salmon/sea trout.
- Obtaining measures that are proportional to the main challenge (above)
- Develop effective 'non-drug' control measures and implement these
- Keep maintaining low levels of sea lice with minimal use of drugs

Références

Final report METALICE

FEAP Actions

The most difficult part of the sea lice topic is clarifying the 'possible influence on wild populations from sea lice coming from aquaculture plants'; the numbers of sea lice today on farmed fish is far below what would cause negative effects for the fish. The research effort for solutions (non-medical) are huge and promising, but no 'silver bullet' yet.

FEAPs role is limited to:

- Promote more and independent scientific research on the potential effects of sea lice on wild populations
- Revert to relevant associations any questions that arise from MEPs or DGs
- Obtain regular updates on project progress
- Promoting the need for open and independent research on sea lice and salmonids
- Combine and transfer knowledge about the biology and interaction of sea lice and salmonids to other host/parasite problems if necessary

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