



Press Release

Brussels, June 8th, 2026. For immediate publication

FEAP warns the European Commission that its fish welfare report misses science and critical practical realities

Brussels, 29 April 2026.- The Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP) welcomes the European Commission's (DG SANTE) recently released overview report on *Farmed fish welfare*¹, but warns that its main conclusions overlook fundamental scientific and operational challenges facing the sector.

While FEAP strongly supports advancing good farming practices and more focused, species-specific legislation once best practices are established, this federation stresses that the report fails to address several critical realities that define European fish farming.

1. Welfare needs are not homogeneous across species, production systems, or life stages. The report does not adequately differentiate between fish species, production systems, and life stages. Welfare needs can differ strikingly depending on the fish's species, life stage, and size: juveniles have different requirements for portion-sized fish, which in turn differ from large fish weighing several kilograms. Furthermore, the farming system itself critically shapes welfare conditions. What ensures good welfare in one production context may be entirely inadequate in another. The public discussion often overlooks the genuine challenge of setting fixed legislative thresholds given the substantial biological differences between species (e.g., rainbow trout vs. sturgeon in oxygen requirements). Although the Commission's report states that this is within its scope, it does not acknowledge how these differences affect its conclusions.
2. Significant scientific knowledge gaps exist, including a lack of academic consensus on measurement and interpretation. FEAP emphasises that substantial scientific uncertainty remains regarding key aspects of fish welfare, particularly stunning technologies. The report mentions this only superficially. Notably, scientific studies using electroencephalogram (EEG) technology show that each farmed fish species responds differently to stunning methods. Electric stunning, often presented as a perfect solution, is not universally effective across species, sizes, or production systems, and, on too many occasions, leaves fish immobilised but not insensate. Moreover, beyond the existing knowledge gaps, there remains a clear lack of scientific consensus among academics on the most appropriate methods for conducting measurements and interpreting the results. FEAP cautions against premature regulatory requirements that assume scientific consensus where none yet exists.

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/overview/download/2108>