

WELLFISH

Welfare of fish in European Aquaculture

The Challenge

There is increasing pressure on regulatory authorities to legislate on fish welfare. The finfish aquaculture industry has also expressed a need for scientific data on which to base welfare recommendations. Although much less is known about the welfare of fish than that of traditionally farmed animals (birds and mammals), a body of research is growing. This research has been developed by experts in the EU and elsewhere but it is not in an easily accessible format. In order to optimise the use of this information a focused, objective synthesis of the relevant data gathered by researchers, by fish farmers and other stakeholders is needed. The development of welfare tool can only be achieved when good welfare, or its absence, can be identified and measured, which in turn requires a better scientific understanding of the fundamental physiological and behavioral capacities of fish.

Project Objective

WELLFISH is a European network focussed on fish welfare. The principal aim of this project is to bring all relevant stakeholders together to contribute to a more secure foundation for the development of operational welfare indicators (OWIs) – measurements or assessments of welfare that can be made practically at aquaculture facilities – in order to monitor and safeguard the welfare of farmed fish. This action will extend the focus on fish welfare to all key cultured European species such as carp, sea bream and sea bass as well as salmonids.

Output Highlights

Network of Excellence

WELLFISH provided a platform for European expertise in the field of fish welfare, and a forum for interaction with stakeholders, so ensuring involvement and participation from interested parties with respect to the development of fish welfare knowledge and tools, as well as their implementation in European Aquaculture.

State of the art

Fundamental and comparative knowledge on the importance of different biological factors, e.g. brain physiology, stress physiology, health, behaviour, growth and environmental conditions on fish welfare were collected. These formed the basis for the development, understanding and validation of fish welfare indicators in situations relevant to experimental and production environments.

Welfare indicators

Operational welfare indicators and produce OWI-matrices including production experience, environmental factors and key management procedures were developed.

Decision making

The main interests of the stakeholder groups in fish welfare, namely research, regulatory authorities and industry, were investigated to formulate recommendations, control systems and support tools for decision makers in government and industry.



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EATiP Thematic Area of Relevance

TA1: Product Quality, Consumer Safety and Health

TA2: Technology and Systems

TA3: Managing the Biological Lifecycle

TA4: Sustainable Feed Production

TA5: Integration with the Environment

TA6: Knowledge Management

TA7: Aquatic Animal Health and Welfare

TA8: Socio-Economics and Management

Key Words

Welfare, fish, welfare indicators, ethics

Project Information

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867

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Cost action

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This site is no longer available



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