

Recommendation n° 28:

Analysis of the Aquaculture situation in the Outermost Regions

Although aquaculture is the fastest growing food sector in the world, the outermost regions (ORs) are at very different levels in terms of development of this activity.

Considering the various difficulties experienced by CCRUP throughout this year and a half of effective functioning, was the fact that we had lack of information when we endeavour to discuss issues associated with aquaculture and the consequent difficulty in drafting informed recommendations. So, the CCRUP decided to prepare a brief study regarding the aquaculture in the Outermost Regions and the respective *SWOT* analysis of the information collected, in order to understand what resemble us and what distinguish us, promoting more assertive discussions, both internally and with the European Commission and Member States, fostering the improvement of information for the development of aquaculture in the ORs.

Thus, CCRUP concluded:

- Thanks to the support of local policies, the Canary Islands have managed to develop significant aquaculture production;
- Among the Portuguese ORs, Madeira is the most developed, while the Azores are still at an experimental stage. However, this region already has specific legislation for aquaculture;
- The French outermost regions are far behind of their potential development, whether mainly marine, as in *Martinique*, *Mayotte* and *Guadeloupe*, or “*in land*”, as in *La Réunion* and French Guyana. *Saint-Martin* doesn’t have aquaculture activity. *Mayotte* must restart from zero. French Guyana is having difficulties to start its development. *La Réunion*, *Martinique* and *Guadeloupe* together produce less than 100 tonnes/year;
- The distance of the ORs from continental Europe, conditions the production contexts (import costs) and limits the accessibility to the most demanding markets;
- The Canary Islands can import fries at low cost and export their fish to mainland Europe. The French ORs must produce their own fish fries on a small scale and be restricted to their local markets.

However, everybody agrees on the need to develop sustainable aquaculture, with the aim of contributing more to the European aquaculture production and reducing the territories food dependence, while preserving the environment. The crises that we are facing, including COVID 19, make this last objective one of the strategic elements of resilience in the ORs.

There is a willingness by the local entities to support the development of aquaculture. Although the potential remains intact, the obstacles observed are often shared:

- Strong administrative and regulatory restrictions;
- Weak structuring of the sectors;
- Low attractiveness of the sector for the economy;
- Weak bank support;
- Absence of operational incubators able to guarantee the supply of juveniles in regular quantities and quality;
- Lack of technical centres capable of supporting the sector;
- Additional production costs, due to the distance to the European continent;
- Risk of cyclones/hurricanes;
- Insufficient research resources specifically dedicated to aquaculture;
- Lack of control over the creation of native species, in a context of stricter regulation on the introduction of exotic species;
- Negative perception of the activity by the public.

The Outermost Regions benefit from several strengths (intrinsic) and opportunities (extrinsic) related to the aquaculture sector, but it is still necessary to unlock the identified threats, whether they are financial, regulatory, administrative, scientific, technical, logistical or in terms of public perception.

It should be noted that the EMFAF Regulation (EU) 2021/1139 offers a new opportunity for the development of aquaculture, for all the outermost regions. However, it is important to ensure that the implementation of the EMFAF is prompt, so that it does not lead to an empty period, which would further undermine the sector. This new regulation should also be more efficient than the EMFF, regarding the application processing.

In conclusion, the CCRUP reiterates that this work just intends to serve as a basis for the European Commission and interested Member States to **develop further studies on aquaculture in our territories, promoting better knowledge and the determination of more appropriate measures for this sector.**

The President of the Executive Committee of the CC RUP,

(David Pavón González)