

### Recommendation n. ° 51

#### **Valorisation of fishing co-products from the Outermost Regions (ORs)**

The largest aquaculture sector in the ORs is marine fish farming. It is estimated that marine fish farming production in the ORs as a whole is around 8 thousand tons/year. Aquaculture production in the Canary Islands is responsible for most of this production, with 6.3 thousand tons/year, while the Portuguese ORs produce around 1.5 thousand ton/year and the French ORs 200 tons/year.

Marine fish farming in the ultra-peripheral regions is based on the creation of species with a high trophic level, such as sea bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*), gilt-head seabream (*Sparus aurata*) and red drum (*Sciaenops ocellatus*). The feed used are rich in proteins and energy, consisting mainly of fish oil and fishmeal from industrial fishing and from the valorisation of fishing co-products.

The incorporation of proteins of vegetable origin made it possible to substantially reduce the proportion of proteins from fishing.

The main expense of a fish farming company is the purchase of fish feed. Globally, we can estimate that each territory consumes a volume of feed equivalent to twice its production. Aquaculture production in the ORs consumes approximately 16 thousand tons/year of feed.

At the same time, fisheries in the ORs are responsible for almost 34 thousand tons/year of fish landed annually. These volumes vary depending on the territories: around 10 thousand tons/year in the Azores; 8.2 thousand tons/year in the Canaries; 6 thousand tons/year in Madeira; 7.5 thousand tons/year in French Guiana, Reunion and Guadeloupe (2.5 thousand tons/year each); 2.4 thousand tons/year in Martinique and Mayotte (1.2 thousand tons/year each).

Of these gross volumes, less than 50% consists of directly consumable fish meat. Therefore, it is estimated that at least half of these volumes originate co-products: heads, bones, viscera.

We know little about the fate of these co-products in the ORs. Despite being a potential source of proteins and lipids, it is likely that currently most of these co-products are treated as waste and end up in landfills or directly in the sea. This in itself constitutes a nutritional and financial waste.

Collecting and transporting these products to landfills can also represent a heavy cost for fishing companies, as is the case in French Guiana, as well as an unnecessary carbon footprint. However, fishing co-products can be valued in various ways: oil extraction, production of fishmeal, hydrolysates, silage and fertilizers, etc. At the moment, it is difficult to value fishing co-products in the ORs, since the volumes to be transformed are too modest to make possible processing plants profitable.

Based on the opinion of the experts invited to present their work during the “Aquaculture” working group meeting on March 19, 2024, we consider that it is now opportune to reconsider this possibility, taking into account the evolution of the context:

- Significant regular increases in the price of fish oil and fishmeal (currently between 1.5 thousand and 2 thousand US\$/ton);
- Increase in transport costs;
- Current and future crises likely to disrupt maritime traffic and weaken the aquaculture sectors in the ORs;
- The need to increase the resilience of the fishery and aquaculture sectors and reduce their carbon footprint;
- Create added value and employment in the ORs through the development of circular economy.

The European Union (EU) has been compensating ORs for the additional costs of fishing and aquaculture since 2014. These additional costs correspond to the difference in the costs of production factors between continental Europe and the ORs. In the case of aquaculture, the main additional cost is related to the import of feed from the mainland EU. By offsetting these additional costs, the EU is, in effect, financing the maritime transport of fish feed, so we **recommend** considering financing the development of local solutions to value fishery co-products in the ORs and produce fish feed.

To make the above possible, the **Advisory Council for the Outermost Regions (CCRUP)** recommends to Member States the following studies and respective financing for each of its ORs:

- 1- Evaluate the “fishing co-products” resource in each territory in terms of species caught, volumes, composition and seasonality;
- 2- Prepare an inventory of the processing and circulation of fishing co-products, namely collection and recovery systems;
- 3- Study the possibility of creating a logistic system for collecting these co-products that respects regulations and sanitary conditions, and promoting its establishment;
- 4- Prepare an inventory of regulatory constraints and verify the extent to which they may constitute obstacles to the valorisation of fishing co-products;
- 5- Define the best options to value fishing co-products, taking these constraints (4) into account;
- 6- Assess the order of importance of investment, production costs and creation of added value, to increase the efficiency of support ;
- 7- If the transformation into fish oil and fish meal proves to be reasonable, consider the possibility of supporting the manufacture of fish feed.

**CCRUP recommends that the European Commission:**

- 1- Study possibilities for valorisation of fishing co-products in the ORs;
- 2- Study possibilities for producing feed for aquaculture from these co-products.

The President of the Executive Committee of the CCRUP,

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