

Position paper

agreed at the Session on Aquaculture of Central and Eastern Europe held during the Aquaculture Europe 2019 Conference, Berlin, Germany, 10 October 2019

The Network of Aquaculture Centres in Central and Eastern Europe (NACEE) held a special session on aquaculture of Central and Eastern Europe during the Aquaculture Europe 2019 conference in Berlin. The event was attended by speakers and participants from Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy and the Russian Federation. The participants discussed a number of issues including trends of aquaculture development in the CEE region and in individual countries, quantified data on nutrient footprint, production and ecosystem services provided by central European fishponds, environmental status of fish ponds, food safety issues, genetic properties of individual fish species and precision farming in intensive farms.

The participants took note of the ongoing revision of the 2013 Commission Strategic Guidelines for the sustainable development of EU aquaculture, and underlined the importance of adequately representing the environmental, social and economic role of pond aquaculture in the new Strategic Guidelines.

It was noted that the economic potential and beneficial services of pond aquaculture were largely overlooked in the EU, although there were many innovative solutions available for the sustainable intensification of its production. As an example, traditional carp production in most central European fishponds is apparently ‘cleaner’ than other food production sectors in EU. Any notion to downscale production intensity in natural waters like fishponds for pursuing greener goals should be revisited or dealt with cautiously.

It was also highlighted that pond aquaculture, especially in combination with intensive production (combined intensive-extensive systems), could be an efficient and sustainable biomass-producing sector with a significant potential for waste minimization, and could play an important role in reaching the EU’s strategic objectives of climate neutrality, preservation of rural areas, improving the quality of surface waters, developing circular economy, improving employment in inland areas and providing the population with nutritious, affordable and safe food.

The participants also reiterated the importance of further developing recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS) for a safe, controlled, continuous and sustainable production of high-value species and efficient waste control. The potential of RAS for integration with hydroponic greenhouses or biogas production for financial, environmental, socioeconomic, and energetic sustainability was particularly noted.

The need to further improve fish marketing and processing in the region was also highlighted as an important priority.