

**Joint Declaration of Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany,
Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain
on enhanced support for aquaculture enterprises
from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund**

The Member States:

- REMIND OF the Joint Declaration of Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Luxembourg and Slovakia on the Future role of the Freshwater Aquaculture and Inland Fishery within the CFP Reform presented on the last April Council meeting;
- STRESS THAT the European Union's primary goals for the next programming period are to turn the EU into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy, including, *inter alia*, to promote employment and territorial cohesion and regional development by encouraging economic growth, social inclusion and job creation and to strengthen competitiveness and viability of small and medium-sized enterprises;
- CONSIDERING that the European Union is one of the most important consumers of fish products;
- NOTING that globally aquaculture becomes the most important supplier of fish products, but in the European Union it has recorded the lowest growth rate in the last decades;
- RECALL current unfavorable business conditions due to on-going financial and economic crisis in the EU;
- UNDERLINE that the aquaculture sector plays a vital role in fulfilling aforementioned objectives and that it is therefore of utmost importance to provide it with an adequate level of support;
- WELCOME IN THIS REGARD the proposal on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) and its focus on sustainable aquaculture based on innovation, competitiveness and knowledge in the areas of technological development, innovation and knowledge transfer and better organization of the market;
- HOWEVER, in order to fulfill the aforementioned EU goals, REITERATE THAT there is a need to continue to give priority & support for investments aiming to fulfill market demand through increased aquaculture production, POINTING OUT that the elimination of the traditional investment supports would have a serious adverse effect primarily on small and medium-sized enterprises;
- THEREFORE CALL ON the Commission and the Presidencies to reinstate the support for sustainable productive investments in aquaculture such as fish farms and fish culture facilities (ponds, hatcheries, recirculation systems) in the draft EMFF proposal.

Brussels, 19 March 2012