

Study on the welfare of farmed fish

Country: Belgium

VetEffect has been awarded the 'Study on the welfare of farmed fish: common practices during transport and at slaughter' under the Framework Contract for the provision of evaluation, impact assessment and related services (SANCO/2012/02/11). The study involved desk research, setting up an on-line survey in 11 countries, targeted semi-structured interviews and set up of focus groups.

The aim of the study is to gather information on current animal welfare practices prevailing in European aquaculture as regards to the transport and slaughter of farmed fish. Information will also be gathered on national rules and on the use of international standards, best practices or voluntary assurance schemes. The data collected will be analysed to illustrate to what extent fish welfare issues are addressed or remain unresolved. In addition, factors which may influence the use of animal welfare principles such as the economic situation of the aquaculture industry, trade issues and available knowledge among business operators will be assessed.

Regulations for the transport and killing of fish are stated in official EU Regulations ("animals shall be spared any avoidable pain, distress, or suffering during their killing and related operations"). However the EFSA (European Food Safety Authority) notes that the implementation of the Regulation has encountered some difficulties. For this reason the EU launched a study on the welfare of farmed fish during transport to gain a better understanding of the situation prevailing in this sector.

The study included 5 fish species and 11 case study countries in the European Economic Area (EEA):

- Atlantic salmon; Norway, United Kingdom and Ireland
- Common carp: Poland, Czech Republic and Germany
- Rainbow trout: Denmark, France, Italy and Poland
- European sea bass: Greece, Spain and Italy
- Gilthead sea bream: Greece, Spain and Italy

For comparison purposes, the study also looked at relevant aspects of aquaculture production in four countries outside the EEA: Canada, Chile, China and Turkey. The consultation involved experts from competent authorities; industry representatives including fish producers, transporters and equipment manufacturers, and international and national animal welfare organisations active in fish welfare. **The final study report can be downloaded [HERE](#).**

The study involved:

- Review of the scientific and grey literature
- Review of national legislation in 11 countries
- Review of private standards
- Information on equipment and training
- Description of current situation on welfare practices in case study countries and non-EEA countries
- Analysis of animal welfare practices, compared to the OIE standard
- Socio-economic analysis

