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Welfare

Study outlines ways to improve welfare and production of five farmed fish species in Europe

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By Responsible Seafood Advocate

Study recommends new research, training and funding priorities to help fill 'knowledge gaps' on farmed fish species

In December 2022, the [Aquaculture Advisory Council \(https://aac-europe.org/en/\)](https://aac-europe.org/en/) (AAC) to the European Commission released a report on how to improve the welfare of farmed fish and aquaculture production on the continent.

The study, which was conducted by researchers at the Algarve Centre of Marine Sciences (CCMAR-Algarve), aims to provide insight and advice to the European Commission, Member States and European decision-makers on the benefits of using the increasing knowledge about the behavior and ethology of farmed fish. The study focuses on the behavioral and welfare needs of the five main species farmed in the European Union (EU): sea bass, sea bream, salmon, trout and carp.

In the report, a definition of animal welfare is proposed, allowing the testing, validation and implementation of measures that improve the welfare and production of aquaculture fish. It also



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identifies the main challenges faced by captive farmed fish: environmental (water quality, light, temperature), ethological (space, density, reproduction), physiological (pain, disease, parasites, stress) and human-induced (handling, slaughter, transport).

The report also pinpoints future research priorities, including addressing knowledge gaps on the natural behavior of farmed species, which can inform animal welfare. The researchers also suggest the development of environmental enrichment strategies and the development of technological tools to monitor farmed fish.

To integrate and implement these recommendations, the researchers propose the creation of training courses at different levels, as well as the establishment of the European Reference Centre of Fish Welfare. Priorities for research on the welfare of farmed fish in Europe and funding priorities are also explored.

[Read the full report here](https://www.ccmар.ualg.pt/sites/ccmar.ualg.pt/files/aac_ethology_and_welfare_final.pdf)

[\(.https://www.ccmар.ualg.pt/sites/ccmar.ualg.pt/files/aac_ethology_and_welfare_final.pdf\)](https://www.ccmар.ualg.pt/sites/ccmar.ualg.pt/files/aac_ethology_and_welfare_final.pdf).

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