

## ACFA's Opinion<sup>1</sup> on the Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

### **Background**

A meeting was arranged on the conflict concerning the Great Cormorant in Brussels on 31st March 2009, which was attended by several European Fish producer Associations and the European Anglers Association. Based on previous dialogues and the strength of the arguments regarding the predation of wild and fish stocks by cormorants in Europe, attendees expected significant progress on a sound, scientifically-based management plan for cormorants in the EU.

Aquaculture and angling representatives were surprised to learn that the European Commission does not believe that a pan-European management plan would be an appropriate solution to the problem.

The position of ACFA is that only a pan-European concerted Action Plan can contribute to successfully solving the problem. Populations of cormorants are increasing all over Europe causing rising damage to the environment, fisheries and fish farming. The position of the ACFA is to find a solution, which is compatible with European legislation and policies, that takes into account the interests of fisheries/fish farming and the need to protect this predatory bird species.

The opinion of ACFA is that the large, existing Cormorant population (population estimates vary following different sources) is not sustainable in Europe and that the damage caused by this population to the environment, flora and fauna needs an immediate and community-wide response. In some of the Member States (France, Denmark, Hungary etc.) the authorities responsible for environmental protection recognise these problems and have applied for the derogation for population control. Other Member States have not followed this route (e.g. Netherlands, Poland, and some Regional Länder of Germany) as well as Norway and Croatia, thereby allowing the migrating stock to continue to increase, putting pressure on wild and farmed fish stocks in other Member States of the European Union.

*In the light of these observations, ACFA has adopted the following Opinion.*

### **Resolution:**

1. ACFA insists that the European Commission provide a clear explanation on the rationale behind its decision to deny the major sectors of aquaculture, recreational angling and fisheries the opportunity to achieve sound scientific management of a voracious predatory species.
2. In particular, the Commission should appreciate that the social, environmental and economic contributions of European fisheries, aquaculture, angling and rural tourism are severely compromised by the current position and lack of coordinated action.
3. ACFA requests that the Commission (DG Environment) confirm the current population level of the Great Cormorant and identify the minimum level for a sustainable, self-sustaining population, giving the scientific basis for this target.
4. ACFA urgently calls for a pan-European concerted Action Plan on cormorants that encourages both the Commission and EU Member States to promote the sustainable management of the population of this species by means of scientific and administrative coordination, cooperation and communication.

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<sup>1</sup> The NGOs do not support this Opinion.

5. ACFA calls on the Commission to provide a draft of a Europe-wide cormorant management plan by the third quarter of 2009 so as to enable rapid consultation on this.
6. ACFA believes that further delay to the implementation of concrete actions to address these issues will continue to damage extensive pond aquaculture – further reducing its competitiveness – noting that the recent Communication on ‘Building a sustainable future for aquaculture’ invited Member States to recognise the importance of extensive and traditional forms of aquaculture.