

Mr. Costas Kadis
Commissioner-designate for
Fisheries and Oceans
CC: Mr. Olivér Várhelyi,
Commissioner-designate for
Health and Animal Welfare

Brussels, 24 September 2024

Subject: It is high time the European Union pays attention to fish welfare

Dear Commissioner-designate,

On behalf of [Compassion in World Farming](#), the world's leading farm animal welfare organisation campaigning to stop farm animal suffering, and [Eurogroup for Animals](#), the pan-european animal welfare advocacy organisation, we would like to extend our sincere congratulations on your nomination as Commissioner-candidate for Fisheries and Oceans.

It is critical that the European Union (EU) uses the opportunity of a renewed focus on sustainable fisheries and ocean protection to set its growing fisheries and aquaculture sectors on a truly sustainable path, in line with the objectives of the [Common Fisheries Policy](#) and the [2030 Strategic Guidelines on Sustainable Aquaculture](#). This will only be made possible by setting high fish welfare standards in aquaculture to guarantee the high quality, cruelty-free products European consumers are increasingly demanding.

Indeed, we would like to bring to your attention [a new survey](#) (here attached with its factsheet) released today and carried out in **9 EU countries** including key aquaculture producers such as Greece, France, Spain, and Italy, which shows support for better fish welfare protection from an **overwhelming 91% of EU citizens**.

Additionally, the survey reveals a massive **80% of EU citizens say they would support legislation that requires use of best practices and latest science to meet welfare needs**, while **86% believe EU funding should only go to high welfare farms**.

It is further worth recognising that an overwhelming **93% of EU citizens would like to buy higher welfare products**.

While [up to one billion fish are farmed](#) in the EU each year, there is currently no specific legislation that takes into account their welfare and unique needs, allowing for unethical practices to persist.


Yet, there is significant scientific evidence demonstrating that fish are sentient beings, able to feel pleasure and pain, including several EFSA opinions dated from 2009 and [scheduled](#) to be updated in the coming years.

As a result, the majority of farmed fish in the EU experience pain and suffering in intensive farms, experiencing stressful handling methods, injuries such as scale loss and fin erosion, starvation, overcrowding and inhumane slaughter methods.

The direction that the European Commission will take in this regard is certainly under the scrutiny of EU citizens and will influence their trust in the EU institutions. The new Commission must meet their expectations, and finally respond to their call to protect these long-forgotten species.


We therefore urge you to make it a priority of your mandate, jointly with the Commissioner-candidate for Health and Animal Welfare, to commit to **deliver species-specific welfare provisions for farmed fish as part of the comprehensive revision of animal welfare laws on kept animals, slaughter and labelling**, announced in the [2020 Farm to Fork Strategy](#) and restated in the recent report of the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture. This emphasises that the Commission should propose the revision of the animal welfare legislation by 2026.

Yours sincerely,



Reineke Hameleers
CEO

**EUROGROUP
FOR ANIMALS**



Peter Stevenson
Chief Policy Advisor

**COMPASSION
in world farming** 
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