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From: Working Party on Internal and External Fisheries Policy
To: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1)/Council

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Subject: Special Report No 10/2014 from the European Court of Auditors
"Effectiveness of European Fisheries Fund support for aquaculture"
- *Draft Council Conclusions*
- *Adoption*

1. On 19 September 2014 the European Court of Auditors forwarded to the Council its Special Report no. 10/2014 "Effectiveness of European Fisheries Fund support for aquaculture"¹.
2. The Working Party on Internal and External Fisheries Policy examined the report in accordance with the provisions laid down in the Council conclusions on the procedure for examining Special Reports drawn up by the Court of Auditors².
3. At the close of its proceedings, the Working Party agreed on the draft conclusions set out in the Annex.
4. COREPER is accordingly requested to approve these draft Council conclusions and submit them to the Council for adoption as an "A" item.

¹ OJ C 319, 17.9.2014, p. 16
² Doc. 7515/00 FIN 127 + COR 1.

DRAFT
COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS
on Special Report No 10/2014 from the European Court of Auditors on
the effectiveness of European Fisheries Fund support for aquaculture

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

- (1) WELCOMES Special Report No 10/2014 from the European Court of Auditors and NOTES the Court's findings and recommendations with regard to the design and implementation of European Fisheries Fund (EFF) support for aquaculture up to 2013;
- (2) RECALLS its support for sound financial management of the EU funds and for efforts to improve the way the budget is managed;
- (3) ACKNOWLEDGES that the measures to support the sustainable development of aquaculture have not been sufficiently well designed and monitored, in part at Union and to some extent at national level, to achieve the expected results within the examined period;
- (4) UNDERLINES the negative effect that the financial and economic crisis have had on the project selection and execution, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises, and STRESSES that support for aquaculture faces inherent challenges such as securing adequate access to space, long licensing procedures and strong external competition. Also NOTES the Court's analysis of cases of significant stock losses due to predation which negatively impacted on the achievement of results;
- (5) RECALLS that EU aquaculture respects the highest environmental, consumer and health standards which contribute to a positive differentiation in the global market of aquaculture products;

- (6) Noting that the EFF will continue to be utilised until end-2015, EXPECTS that final results of the support for aquaculture will improve compared to the period examined by the Court;
- (7) RECALLS that the development of sustainable aquaculture is one of six Union priorities under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) for the period 2014 to 2020 and SHARES the Commission's view that the new Common Fisheries Policy and the EMFF provide a clearer framework to support the sustainable and cost-effective development of EU aquaculture;
- (8) UNDERLINES innovation, partnership and cooperation, between operators and the market chain, as critical success factors;
- (9) NOTES WITH SATISFACTION that some of the Court's recommendations have been reflected in the design of aquaculture support under the EMFF. In particular PRAISES the Commission for developing the common strategic guidelines for the development of sustainable aquaculture in the EU and CONSIDERS that the *ex ante* conditionality will more effectively link funding for aquaculture activities under Operational Programmes to the relevant priorities and guidelines in the multiannual national strategic plan for the development of aquaculture;
- (10) WELCOMES the Commission's efforts in developing guidelines for facilitating the application of the Water Framework Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive in the aquaculture sector, RECOGNISES the need for administrative simplification in project approvals and CALLS for, where appropriate, continued efforts at Union and national levels to overcome other significant barriers to aquaculture development, such as those related to the management of predator populations;

- (11) **UNDERLINES** the need to improve the absorption of funds and **NOTES** the related efforts undertaken at national level, in particular to integrate support for aquaculture in spatial planning, to raise, where necessary, the operators' awareness of support measures, and to strengthen the environmental aspects of support measures;
- (12) **WELCOMES** the common monitoring indicators and reporting standards developed by the Commission and **EXPECTS** them to be instrumental for improving the monitoring and transparency of programme execution and of results;
- (13) **HOLDS THE VIEW** that the various data collection exercises related to aquaculture need more coherence in content and form, and notes the Commission's availability to work together towards this objective;
- (14) **CONSIDERS** that the Court's relevant recommendations should be taken into account, where appropriate, at the Union and national level during implementation of the EMFF.
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