

Brussels, 17 September 2025
(OR. en)

12831/25

PECHE 266

NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB for the meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council on 22-23 2025: Need for measures to allow ecosystem-based hunting of cormorants, and to coordinate among Member States to take actions to protect sensitive fish stocks and strengthen biodiversity - Information from Sweden, supported by the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Romania, and Slovakia

Need for measures to allow ecosystem-based hunting of cormorants, and to coordinate among Member States to take actions to protect sensitive fish stocks and strengthen biodiversity

Information from Sweden supported by the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Romania and Slovakia

The health and development of fish populations throughout the European Union has raised concerns about the level of fish predation from predatory species. Some coastal areas, lakes and rivers, that have had a healthy biodiversity of fish in the past, are now low in population densities and poor in species variation.

Despite stricter fisheries management and investments of hundreds of millions of euros each year to improve water quality, habitats and biodiversity in these areas, the goals have not been reached. To strengthen the recovery of fish stocks and thereby strengthen the food base for humans, fish eating birds and marine mammals, we believe that a holistic approach is needed. This includes addressing the increased populations of cormorants.

On 3 June 2025, the Polish Presidency to the Council of the European Union and European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC) organised a conference on management advice to mitigate cormorant predation impacts. The magnitude of impact is described

by EIFAAC; cormorants in Europe consume more than 300 million kg of fish each year in our rivers, lakes, coastal areas and in aquaculture and natural ponds.

At the conference the second draft of a framework for a European Management Plan for the Great Cormorant was presented and discussed. The Plan contains the latest information on the impact of cormorant predation on fish, fisheries and aquaculture, including the economic consequences of cormorant predation.

The administrative measures, investigations and regulations needed to approve hunting on derogations from the Birds directive are clearly not proportional for this abundant species. Further, when a decision is made it can be appealed, and the hunt canceled. In our view, strict regulations of hunting should be reserved for threatened species that need protection and not be used to unnecessarily restrict hunting on species whose numbers need to be reduced. Thus, hunting on derogations is clearly not efficient nor sufficient for limiting the population growth on the scale likely to be needed to reduce the negative effects of cormorants on vulnerable fish stocks.

Signatory Member States stress the need for measures and coordinated actions within the EU to successfully manage the pan-European cormorant population. We see these actions as an important part of a holistic approach to safeguard the recovery of vulnerable fish stocks.

Based on the above, signatory MS requests the Commission to:

- **Put forward a proposal where cormorants are listed in Annex II of the Birds Directive as a huntable species.**
- **Take due action to coordinate cormorant management within the EU, based on the content in the EIFAAC framework of a Cormorant management plan.**