

REPORT

Meeting: **Conference on management advice to reduce cormorant predation impacts**

Parties: **Polish Presidency to the Council of the European Union, EIFAAC, stakeholders**

Date: **3 June 2025**

Location: **Brussels**

Rapporteur: **Tamara Talevska**

1 Welcome and Introductions

The Polish Presidency to the Council of the European Union and the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC) organised the **Conference on management advice to reduce cormorant predation impacts** on 3 June.

The aim of the meeting was to present the draft **Framework towards development of a European Management Plan for the Great Cormorant**. Comments on this draft can be submitted until Tuesday 17 June to the EIFAAC Secretariat: EIFAAC-Secretariat@fao.org.

This document is an updated version of the draft plan that was discussed at the [Stakeholder consultation on the draft European Cormorant Management Plan - Calendar](#), held on 25 April 2025, and on which was commented afterwards by many stakeholders. The feedback table with comments on the 1st plan can be found on the meeting page of the stakeholder consultation.

2 European Commission – Felix Leinnemann

The European Commission expressed its appreciation to the Polish Presidency, the FAO, and the EIFAAC for organizing the conference and initiating efforts to manage the increasing impact of cormorant populations on European aquatic resources.

There has been a significant increase in cormorant populations across Europe. This has led to growing conflicts with socio-economic activities, particularly fisheries, aquaculture, and recreational angling.

The Commission emphasized the centrality of science-based decision-making. Acknowledged EIFAAC work in compiling research, stakeholder consultations, and promoting understanding of the issue.

While recognizing cross-border implications, the Commission believes cormorant impacts are best addressed at the local level. Nonetheless, cooperation between Member States is seen as crucial for effective management.

The Commission reaffirmed support for EIFAAC through EU grants under the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund. Cited the flexibility available under existing legislation, particularly the EU Birds Directive (Article 9 derogations). The Commission does **not currently plan to revise the legal protection status of cormorants or implement a binding EU-wide management plan.**

The Commission has offered guidance and best practices to Member States. There is a toolbox of solutions already available within the current legal framework. Strategic guidelines from 2021 continue to support sustainable aquaculture, considering species interaction.

The Commission encouraged EIFAAC to:

- Continue developing its draft management proposals.
- Ensure inclusive stakeholder consultation.
- Involve national authorities responsible for Birds Directive implementation, despite resource constraints.

The Commission stressed the importance of including scientific evidence in all management proposals to ensure legitimacy and credibility. It called for collaboration not only among authorities but also between fisheries and conservation stakeholders. The goal is to arrive at balanced, lawful, and ecologically sound solutions.

3 FAO – Raschad Al-Khafaji (Director of FAO Brussels)

The FAO representative warmly welcomed participants to the conference on managing cormorant predation impacts, emphasizing the critical role of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture for food and livelihood security in Europe.

The speech highlighted the long-standing call—from the European Parliament (2008, 2018, 2022) and AIFAC member states (2022, 2024)—for a European framework management plan for the great cormorant. While the EU Birds Directive successfully protected cormorants, it also led to unintended ecological and economic consequences, prompting the need for coordinated management.

FAO's European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC), active since 1957, is developing this plan with input from all key stakeholders, including conservation and fisheries groups.

The representative stressed the plan must be science-based, adaptive, and inclusive, aligning with major EU strategies such as the Water Framework Directive, Biodiversity Strategy 2030, and Nature Restoration Regulation.

In closing, participants were urged to bring their expertise, creativity, and collaboration to ensure that cormorant protection does not undermine ecosystem balance or the livelihoods of European fishers and farmers.

4 Presentation of the impact of cormorant predation on fish populations (Dr Niels Jepsen, Danish Technical University)

Dr. Niels Jepsen of the Danish Technical University opened the scientific segment of the conference with a detailed presentation on the impact of cormorant predation on fish populations. With three decades of experience in freshwater biology, he emphasized that his role is to provide objective scientific evidence to inform political and management decisions, not to advocate for one outcome or another. Collaborating with colleagues Ian Cowx and Dr. Raymond van Anrooy, Jepsen has been closely involved in drafting a European management framework for cormorants, commissioned by DG MARE.

He began by acknowledging the polarization between fisheries and bird conservation communities. Fisheries experts often see cormorant impacts as self-evident and scientifically established, while bird conservation groups tend to question the severity of the issue or attribute fish stock declines to other causes. Jepsen emphasized that the framework integrates both sides of the scientific literature—including studies that show significant impacts and those that do not.

He explained the growth of the Western Palearctic cormorant population, which now numbers over one million birds in Europe and has greatly expanded its geographical range since the 1980s. This population boom has created hotspots of conflict across Europe: in the Baltic, where small-scale coastal fisheries are under pressure; in Central Europe, where river fish populations are declining; in Eastern Europe, where pond aquaculture is heavily affected; and in Northern Europe and Ukraine, where salmonids suffer extensive predation in rivers and estuaries.

Jepsen presented a coastal case study from the western Baltic, where cod populations have collapsed. His team estimated that cormorants consume up to 15 million cod annually in Danish waters, nearly matching the entire yearly cod recruitment of 17 million. A tagging study showed that up to 70% of juvenile cod were predated by cormorants over a six-month period. This level of predation, while not necessarily the cause of the collapse, severely limits the potential for population recovery, even when fishing pressure is reduced. Similar trends were observed with flounder, echoing results from older studies in Denmark and the Netherlands.

Shifting focus to rivers, Jepsen described cormorants as highly damaging in these ecosystems. He shared evidence from Denmark's last self-sustaining wild salmon river, where intensive restoration investments were undermined by heavy predation. Cold winters in 2009–2010 drove cormorants inland for the first time, resulting in sharp declines in grayling and other riverine species. Field surveys showed drastically reduced fish numbers and widespread physical marks from cormorant attacks. Grayling, a species protected under the EU Habitats Directive, has been particularly impacted in Central Europe, where local management is powerless against migratory birds originating from distant breeding sites.

Jepsen strongly challenged the notion that cormorant conflicts are local issues. The birds' migratory behavior makes the problem inherently transboundary, requiring coordinated international action. He concluded that while the scientific debate continues, the available data clearly support the need for management measures, as cormorant predation poses a serious barrier to the recovery and sustainability of both wild fish populations and aquaculture operations across Europe.

Jepsen described long-term data from Danish rivers, such as one where grayling densities were high until otters appeared in the 1990s, after which populations declined moderately but remained stable. However, from 2010 onwards, the arrival of cormorants led to an almost complete collapse of grayling in the same river. In another river where cormorants were thought to be absent, only 25 grayling were found along a 7 km stretch. After tagging them, researchers discovered that nearly all were eaten within two weeks during a cold spell, as confirmed by recovered tags beneath roosting sites.

To assess their impact further, Jepsen tested juvenile salmon and sea trout survival in restored rivers, comparing sections open to predators with those covered to exclude cormorants. In uncovered areas, winter survival was only 17%, while covered sections saw survival rise to 50%, a threefold increase. He noted that although Denmark has invested heavily in river restoration—removing dams, improving habitats, and supporting local engagement—these gains are undermined by high levels of predation. He referenced one chalk stream, the Vilusbrook River, where smolt production jumped from a few thousand to over 25,000 following restoration, and sea trout returns reached over 3,000 in 2016. Yet, cormorants began consuming not only smolts and juveniles but also adult fish, threatening these restored populations.

Compiling multiple studies, Jepsen reported that cormorants reduce fish survival at various life stages—by 40% in juveniles, 47% in smolts, 24% in coastal young trout, and 40% in first-return adult salmon—resulting in an overall estimated population reduction of up to 84%. This trend aligns with findings from the Protect Fish project, which found up to 90% of riverine fish biomass has been lost in some areas.

Jepsen also highlighted a study from South Tyrol, Italy, which found that only 32 cormorants could be sustained by available river fish biomass in a 13,000 km² region. When bird numbers doubled to 65, the local fish populations became unsustainable. This demonstrated that even a small increase in bird numbers can have disproportionate effects, especially in low-biomass environments like rivers.

The situation for European eels is similarly dire. Cormorants prey on eels throughout their life cycle, and Jepsen reported that in some areas, up to 44% of small eels are consumed in a single summer. In Denmark, it is estimated that cormorants are now the leading cause of freshwater eel mortality, even exceeding fishing and hydropower impacts.

Jepsen concluded that cormorant predation is now one of the primary regulating forces for many freshwater fish stocks in Europe, with effects observed in rivers, lakes, and coastal waters. While he acknowledged other factors such as habitat quality and pollution, he stressed

that the scientific evidence clearly supports predation as a significant and measurable pressure.

He advocated for a coordinated EU management plan to address these challenges, arguing that fish stock conflicts are transboundary due to the migratory behavior of cormorants. Existing derogations under Article 9 of the Birds Directive have not solved the issue, despite over 120,000 birds being legally culled across Europe. He warned against unregulated and sometimes extreme vigilante responses to cormorant colonies and called instead for increased monitoring, better data, and scientifically validated management measures.

5 Presentation of the economic consequences of cormorant predation on fisheries and aquaculture (Dr Raymon van Anrooy, European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission)

Building on Dr. Jepsen's overview of ecological impacts, Dr. Van Anrooy emphasized that cormorants are now a major factor driving economic losses in both inland fisheries and aquaculture across Europe.

He began by highlighting the long-term decline in inland freshwater capture fisheries, noting a 43% drop in production from 175,000 tons in 1980 to 100,000 tons in 2023. This trend persists despite significant management efforts by fisheries authorities, including reduced fishing pressure, increased restocking, and widespread adoption of catch-and-release practices. The continued decline, despite these measures, underscores the significant impact of cormorants, which have grown in population and fish consumption over the same period.

Economic losses are staggering. A newly published study estimates over €100 million in annual losses to recreational fisheries alone due to cormorant predation. For aquaculture, the situation is equally severe. Since 1990, freshwater pond production has fallen from 320,000 tons to 260,000 tons—a 19% decline. Of the 360,000 hectares of freshwater ponds available in the EU, over 100,000 are now unused because stocking fish has become economically unviable when cormorants consume entire stocks. Fish farmers face losses ranging from €500 to over €1 million annually, with median losses around €13,000 per farm—amounting to more than half the average income of many Eastern European fish farms.

Van Anrooy described the severe effects on employment, noting a 21% decline in aquaculture jobs in the EU since 2000, compared to a 23% increase in non-EU European countries. Countries like Italy, Spain, France, and Germany have experienced significant job losses in this sector. Despite investments in deterrents such as netting, scare tactics, gas cannons, and even alternative business ventures, fish farmers have seen little success in offsetting losses.

He further contextualized the scale of cormorant impact in terms of food security. A single cormorant consumes around 180 kilograms of fish per year. With an estimated two million cormorants in Europe, they collectively consume about 360,000 tons of fish annually—equivalent to the yearly fish consumption of 30 million people, and representing a value of roughly €1.4 billion. Van Anrooy questioned why only €4 million was allocated for

compensation in 2023 when the estimated damage to inland aquaculture alone reached €250 million.

Beyond direct consumption, cormorants cause additional losses through injuries, disease transmission, and behavioral disruptions in fish. These indirect effects have been scientifically documented and further increase the burden on fish producers.

Van Anrooy also drew attention to policy inconsistencies. While international management plans exist for other migratory bird species under AEWA, such as barnacle and greylag geese, no such mandate currently exists for the cormorant—despite repeated requests from stakeholders and three formal resolutions from the European Parliament dating back to 2008. He emphasized that only member states can grant AEWA the authority to act.

In conclusion, Van Anrooy argued that a European cormorant management plan is essential—not only to protect fisheries and aquaculture, but also to uphold biodiversity goals, meet Water Framework Directive objectives, support rural employment, and ensure food security. He asserted that coordinated, science-based management involving all stakeholders can lead to recovery within five to seven years. The economic and ecological stakes, he concluded, justify immediate and decisive action.

Q&A

Ferenc Levi, representing the **Hungarian Aquaculture Association**, emphasized that pond aquaculture in Hungary is not merely an economic activity but a vital part of the country's ecological heritage. These ponds support biodiversity, provide habitats for migratory birds, help with water retention, and aid in climate adaptation. However, cormorant predation is increasingly undermining these ecological and economic functions, especially impacting small and medium-sized farms. Although initiatives like InterCafe and CorpMan have provided data and tools, they have not delivered practical solutions to the escalating problem. He urged that the European Cormorant Management Plan must go beyond research and offer coordinated, actionable strategies, stressing that this is a European issue requiring immediate action.

Anouk Puymartin, from the **BirdLife** conservation organization, acknowledged the importance of this discussion but voiced concern about the narrative framing cormorants as the main cause of fish population decline. She highlighted that cormorant populations have recovered from near extinction and are native species like many fish. According to recent studies and the 2024 Living Planet Index, fish population declines are more closely tied to structural issues such as habitat degradation, pollution, overfishing, and blocked migration routes. She questioned the emphasis on cormorant predation and stressed that broad population culling lacks scientific support, noting that their diets often include non-commercial or invasive fish, which can benefit ecosystems.

Puymartin emphasized that aquaculture and fisheries face different challenges, with aquaculture experiencing structural issues like declining demand and outdated economic models. She called for practical mitigation measures—like pond netting—and noted that while

cormorants do have a local impact, reducing their numbers wouldn't necessarily solve the broader ecological issues. Finally, she supported existing mechanisms allowing for targeted culling when no alternatives are viable, as long as conditions are met.

In response, scientists acknowledged that cormorant predation is one of several significant factors affecting fish populations and that their impact can be scientifically disentangled from others like climate change or river modifications. They emphasized the importance of combining field data with theoretical modelling. While there's uncertainty about whether reducing cormorant numbers would help across the board, local improvements are possible. Moreover, recreational fisheries and natural habitats supported by aquaculture systems also hold economic and ecological value, further complicating the issue. There was consensus that current approaches are insufficient and that a shift toward more effective and realistic solutions is necessary.

Jan Kappel, Secretary General of the European Anglers Alliance, highlighted that progress on cormorant management has been minimal over the past 24 years. Despite repeated discussions, the European Commission has consistently declined to propose a pan-European management plan. Kappel stressed that the responsibility now lies with individual Member States to take action.

He praised Sweden's recent initiative to propose moving the cormorant to Annex II B of the Birds Directive, which would allow national-level management without requiring an EU-wide plan. With support from Sweden, Finland, Estonia, and Latvia—countries heavily affected around the Baltic Sea—he urged more Member States to join the effort.

Kappel criticized the idea that nature will self-balance over time, arguing that a stable cormorant population curve doesn't mean fish stocks are safe. Instead, it suggests cormorants are consuming fish at maximum capacity, which can harm fish populations, especially young fish. He noted that when the cormorant was removed from Annex I in 1997, their numbers were less than half of what they are today, suggesting that reducing their protection would not endanger the species.

Following his remarks, a **representative from the Council Fisheries Working Party** acknowledged the significant impact of cormorants in the Baltic region and added that seals, whose populations are also growing, are contributing to fish stock pressures. She noted that while seal hunting decisions are national, the EU-wide ban on the trade of seal products is a limiting factor and should be reconsidered. She concluded by asking for scientific insight into the impact of seals on fish populations in the Baltic Sea.

Niels Jepsen responded to criticisms about the lack of concrete measures in the cormorant management plan, clarifying that it is only a framework, not a detailed plan. He noted encouraging regional cooperation around the Baltic Sea through the Nordic Cormorant Research Group. On the issue of seals, Jepsen shared findings from a PhD student's study, showing that while seal and cormorant populations both impact fish stocks, cormorants eat more due to their consumption of smaller fish, while seals target larger ones, preventing fish from reaching maturity.

A representative from Polish fish farming association, criticized the European Commission for failing to act decisively on cormorant issues. She emphasized that derogations allowing the scaring or shooting of birds are ineffective, particularly in pond environments where it's practically impossible to shoot them. Nets and other suggested methods are also unworkable for large-scale carp farming. She stressed that the survival of carp farming is at risk, as economic sustainability is undermined by cormorant predation.

An Estonian representative echoed the concerns, pointing out a broader issue: fish species often receive less protection and attention compared to other animals. They emphasized that the goal isn't to eliminate cormorants but to restore ecological balance. The representative also expressed concern that some groups ignore scientific findings and asked Jepsen whether there are positive cases where previously skeptical groups were eventually persuaded by evidence.

A representative from BSAC highlighted that BSAC brings together sectoral and environmental stakeholders and bases all recommendations on consensus. Despite differing views on cormorant management, BSAC agreed on the need to find a balance between conservation and ecosystem-based fisheries management. They emphasized that although cormorants are not managed like fish, they still significantly impact fish stocks and ecosystems. BSAC recommends setting population targets based on local carrying capacity and the best available science.

Jepsen responded that while it's difficult to effect change at higher levels, collaboration at the local level has shown promise. He gave an example of a productive partnership with BirdLife Denmark, despite initial conflict. Through mutual respect and scientific collaboration, such as co-publishing studies, they reached common ground and influenced local cormorant management efforts. He noted that credible, peer-reviewed evidence gradually helps shift opinions.

A representative of the Fish Protection Contra Cormorant Association stressed the importance of referencing the EU Commission's Water Framework Directive (WFD) funding—nearly €289 billion—to highlight the economic importance of fish stock recovery. He urged the use of this figure to persuade policymakers, arguing that the money is wasted without addressing cormorant predation.

A representative from the Polish Inland Fisheries Association emphasized the urgent need for EU-level legislative changes. She criticized the lack of clear definitions around acceptable population sizes of protected bird species like the great cormorant and the absence of effective derogation procedures. She called for:

- A European wildlife conservation program defining sustainable bird population sizes.
- Year-round derogations for shooting cormorants and herons on fish farms.
- Compensation for damages caused by birds.
- Simplified, long-term permitting processes.

6 Presentation of the European cormorant management plan (Dr Ian Cowx, Angling Trust/ University of Hull)

Dr. Ian Cowx from the Angling Trust at the University of Hull delivered a presentation focused on the need for a European Management Plan for cormorants. He clarified that this is a framework, not a fixed plan, and aims to offer an adaptive approach to managing cormorant populations in harmony with fish conservation and fisheries interests.

He highlighted that cormorants are highly migratory birds whose growing numbers have had a substantial ecological and economic impact. These birds consume significant quantities of fish—estimated at 300,000 tons annually—across both inland and coastal waters, leading to stock reductions and ecological imbalances. Predation, scaring effects on fish, and environmental degradation near colonies further exacerbate the issue. Fish, although often treated as commodities, deserve the same conservation attention as birds, he argued.

Dr. Cowx stressed that while cormorants are protected under the EU Birds Directive, Article 9 derogations offer possibilities for population control, though not all countries utilize these legal tools effectively. Various mitigation strategies have been tried, such as scaring, exclusion, egg oiling, and fish stock management, but many are ineffective on a large scale. Compensation schemes and national management plans exist, yet implementation is inconsistent, and the scale of the problem exceeds the effectiveness of current solutions.

He pointed out the need for a coherent, coordinated approach. Past EU-funded projects like Intercafe and Cormann have contributed resources such as the Intercafe Toolbox, but gaps in data and monitoring remain. Dr. Cowx proposed that a pan-European management framework, inspired by existing successful models for other migratory birds like geese, could guide future actions. This would involve stakeholder cooperation, data standardization, cross-border collaboration, and transparency.

The overall goal of the proposed framework is not to eliminate cormorants but to achieve a balanced coexistence between cormorants, fish populations, and human activities such as fisheries and aquaculture. It advocates for sustainability, evidence-based decisions, adaptability, and alignment with EU directives while ensuring environmental stewardship. The plan operates on a cyclical, six-year management model that incorporates monitoring, evaluation, and stakeholder input at all stages to ensure it remains relevant and responsive to ecological changes.

The speaker outlined the importance and complexity of developing a coordinated, pan-European management plan for cormorants. He emphasized that specific population targets can't be determined immediately—they will emerge naturally within the process during the first phase. Inaction will only lead to recurring issues, so management measures are necessary.

While non-lethal deterrents such as scaring or habitat modifications are important tools, they are not enough on their own. These methods can work under certain conditions, but a more comprehensive solution must include regulated culling. Cormorants are highly mobile, and

population control in one country can be undermined by movement from neighboring regions. Therefore, action must be coordinated regionally—across areas like the Baltic and North Sea—and ultimately integrated into a pan-European strategy.

Management decisions should be based on ecological data and models that assess trade-offs between reducing cormorant numbers and recovering fish populations or sustaining aquaculture. While the speaker does not define an ideal cormorant population, he argues that determining a target number of breeding pairs is essential and will come through stakeholder collaboration. Compensation schemes also need to be harmonized across countries, as current practices vary widely, particularly in support for aquaculture.

A robust system for reporting damages, assessing effectiveness, and feeding back information into the decision-making process is crucial. This iterative review process should align with existing European legislative cycles, such as the Water Framework and Habitats Directives, on a six-year basis. As part of implementation, a Cormorant Management Advisory Group should be formed, composed of diverse but manageable representation, along with a Secretariat to oversee coordination, reporting, and compliance. Annual reporting and long-term reviews will help refine strategies and improve outcomes over time.

Joint monitoring and data collection on bird populations, fish stocks, and habitat changes are essential. Technological advances like drones and new deterrent methods can support management and should be evaluated and incorporated. Flexibility is critical—targets, compensation levels, and success metrics should be continually reviewed and updated based on new findings.

Dr. Cowx concluded by stressing that fish species are in serious decline, as documented in red lists and EU directives, and that while cormorants are not the sole cause, they are a significant factor. Local and national actions have proven insufficient. A shift to coordinated, adaptive, evidence-based management at the European level is necessary. Stakeholder engagement, transparency, education, and continuous feedback are vital. The process will be long-term, but with commitment, it can help balance conservation needs with sustainable fishery practices.

Dr. Cowx explained that all comments on the first draft of the European cormorant management framework were thoroughly reviewed, and responses to nearly every point are available on the project website. Now, it's up to EIFAAC member countries and wider European states to begin making decisions about adopting and implementing the plan.

Stakeholders are urged to submit any further comments within the next two weeks. These will inform the creation of a third draft, which will be reviewed by the EIFAAC Technical Secretariat and Committee. A fourth draft, incorporating all additional feedback, will follow later in the year after the summer break. This version will be sent to the European Parliament and member countries for final review and input.

From there, countries will need to choose a path forward. Options include requesting the adoption of a regional plan through EIFAAC, the European Parliament, or the Bern Convention, or turning the framework into a formal regional or even pan-European action plan.

A key challenge will be securing the necessary funding, which will fall to the individual countries and relevant state agencies. Finally, a request may be made for the EU to develop a single species management plan for cormorants, which is seen as the most promising next step.

Q&A

The **FAO representative** emphasized that the cormorant issue cannot be viewed as purely natural, noting the influence of fish farms in boosting cormorant populations. He stressed the rights of aquaculture producers to protect their stock and raised concerns about maintaining current derogation systems, which allow limited control of cormorants. He also highlighted the need for immediate action and administrative simplification in the framework, and questioned whether compensation for losses should come from sources other than aquaculture development funds.

A **representative of the European Bird Census Council** pointed out the difficulty of monitoring cormorants, noting that the last full count required 5,000 people. He raised a technical question about how the framework accounts for density dependence—how cormorants may breed more when their population is reduced. In response, panelists acknowledged this challenge and emphasized the need for collaboration with ecologists and stakeholders, and for ongoing data collection to inform management strategies.

Estonian representative raised concerns about the practical utility of the plan, noting that too much focus on studying the species without effective outcomes would be disappointing. She also questioned whether the framework could serve as a universal legal justification for Article 9 derogations under EU law, which are often contested in courts and delay practical actions like nest oiling.

The **response** confirmed that this is indeed the goal—to develop a standardized, streamlined process that member states can use, supported by precedents, while still respecting national legal frameworks.

A **representative from the Agriculture Advisory Council and the Romanian Fish Farmers Association**, welcomed the new framework, noting it aligns with previous recommendations and expressing satisfaction that for the first time in 46 years, Article 2 of the Birds Directive includes a clear protection target. He emphasized improved cooperation between farmers and conservation groups, highlighting that farmers are not adversaries but aim to sustainably grow fish, and praised the science-based, logical approach of the plan.

During the online session, a **representative from Moldova** questioned the rapid rise in the cormorant population, asking whether this was solely due to aquaculture or if other environmental factors like land use and climate change also played a role.

Jepsen responded that multiple factors contribute to the population increase, including environmental changes, behavioral adaptations, and the reduction of natural predators, with aquaculture being only one of several influences.

A **representative from Finland** raised concerns about the withdrawal of permits to shoot cormorants after a court ruling, inquiring about evidence supporting the effectiveness of shooting to reduce damage.

Jepsen explained that while some studies exist, comprehensive, large-scale research is ongoing through the ProtectFish project, but legal restrictions on shooting hinder the ability to conduct these necessary experiments.

7 Conclusion

In closing remarks, the **European Commission** acknowledged the high level of engagement and the need for coordinated efforts between Member States, encouraging cooperation between environmental and aquaculture sectors. They noted that a centralized repository for research and data exists and highlighted plans to address other predators in the future.

Organizers expressed gratitude for EU support and the urgency felt by stakeholders, promising to share presentations and draft documents soon and inviting feedback by mid-June. The framework's success was emphasized as dependent on Member State leadership, with calls for continued dialogue and collaboration. The conference concluded with optimism about maintaining momentum, especially under the upcoming Danish presidency, and a strong message that sustained communication and cooperation are key to progressing the management plan effectively.