

**FEAP Resolution on the great cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis* to be a huntable species**

Background

Aquaculture and fisheries sectors as well as open water systems (rivers, lakes and wetlands) have been suffering from depredations by cormorants on a pan-European scale for the last 40-50 years. The cormorant population has increased throughout this period significantly, estimated at more than 2 million individuals and consuming more than 1,000 tons of fish a day currently<sup>1</sup>.

The cormorant clearly fulfils the definition of invasive species, causing significant economic damage (both direct and indirect), mainly at carp ponds, which have suffered millions of losses, both fish and Euros. Their activities pose a threat for the sustainability of the freshwater aquaculture sector, ecosystem services provided by ponds, lakes and wetlands and rural livelihoods.

In addition, cormorants are responsible for a steep decrease of water biodiversity (e.g. loss of brown trout, grayling and other rheophiles), whilst also transmitting diseases and parasites. Their faeces contribute to water eutrophication by phosphorus/nitrogen load and have a herbicidal effect on vegetation close to the nesting sites.

Though the cormorant has received lower level of protection in some EU member states in recent years, licences for the derogation system under Art. 9(1) of the Birds Directive 2009/147/EC have to be issued locally/regionally, incurring all the administrative burdens and restrictions demanded by the local/regional nature protection authority.

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<sup>1</sup> European Parliament forum: “Cormorant: management needed across the borders”

Furthermore, Cormorants are a migratory species and after the limited scaring or shooting of some individuals, flocks of birds merely change to another locality where the impact is renewed, with limited impact on the overall population.

Local damage prevention is thus not sufficient and accordingly, common coordinated measures should be adopted by all affected regions alongside the establishment of protective mechanisms at the EU level.

The European Parliament adopted the resolution "*Towards a European Cormorant Management Plan*" in 2008. Since then (after more than 10 years), only some of Parliament's demands have been fulfilled through actions of the European Commission, such as the guidance document to applying derogations under Art. 9(1), CorMan Project and the EU Cormorant Platform. These limited actions have proved to be totally inadequate. The European Parliament has since adopted an own-initiative report (2017/2118(INI)) "*Towards a sustainable and competitive European aquaculture sector*" which gives clear indications to minimise the increasing impact of cormorants on aquaculture<sup>2</sup>.

Given the very slow progress and the lengthy process of establishing a common mechanism that would be accepted at the EU level, it is crucial to establish permanent measures to regulate the number of cormorants and reduce the economic impact on freshwater aquaculture as well as on biodiversity, water quality and other environmental parameters.

**Having regard all of the above-mentioned, FEAP strongly call for the inclusion of the great cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis* to Annex II, Part A of the Birds Directive 2009/147/EC, a list of species that may be hunted under national legislation.**

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2018-0186\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2018-0186_EN.pdf)