

EU4Environment reinforces the imperative call to embrace resource efficiency within Armenian fisheries

Yerevan, 22 December 2022

The 22nd of December marked an important occasion for the discussion on resource use within key industrial sectors in Armenia. Developed as a Round Table discussion on resource efficiency and waste management in national fisheries, the hybrid event gathered 35 participants, representing the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Economy, the Environmental and Mining Inspection Body of Armenia, state specialized agencies, business organizations, UNIDO, international development partners, and private companies.

The main objectives of the Round Table were to present the current profile of Armenian fisheries, discuss existing regulatory frameworks and barriers to increase productivity and export capacity, and present the potential application of the Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production (RECP) methodology. In this sense, the discussions kicked off with the current situation and challenges faced by fish farms when trying to increase their productivity. Then, it moved towards water use and re-use, the sustainable management of waste generated from fish breeding and processing, and the means to promote RECP benefits and better introduce Circular Economy principles in Armenia.

Within the EU4Environment programme, we are here today to discuss the importance of green investment and development and to directly engage with the fish producers. Hence, we are here to listen to you, the producers, and to see what are the main challenges and concerns you face and how the enforcement of the newly amended Water Code¹ (which focuses on the introduction of closed water systems as of 1st of January 2024) will affect you. In this regard, this meeting is a space to find common ground and solve environmental and economic issues. Knowing that economic growth cannot happen without the efficient use of natural resources and without tackling environmental disasters, I am looking forward to an open and constructive dialogue where our development partners can also present their successful experience in the implementation of the technical assistance projects in Armenia, said Ms. Gayane Gabrielyan, Deputy Minister of Environment, Republic of Armenia.

The fishery sector was purposefully selected for the Round Table event. Aquaculture production (which includes caught and/or captive-bred fish, crustaceans and all the products derived from them) is a thriving economic sector in Armenia, holding both high production and export growth potential. This is well-documented by the high growth rate and marked profitability of fisheries, who, over the past decade alone, recorded an average annual production growth rate of 40 per cent.² The limited agricultural land resources also drive the need to increase the use of other natural resources, and the fish culture holds excellent growth potential. This is because the climatic conditions are favourable for fish culture in surface

¹ Source: <https://env.am/en/news/ra-water-code>

² Source: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/22918?locale-attribute=es>

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waters, with the use of underground waters facilitating year-round industrial production of different species of trout and sturgeon. In recent years, the fish industry has become a well-established one, which may ensure a more sustainable usage of the available resources and many opportunities for national fish producers.³

Within the meeting's discussions, the participants identified some of the most urgent problems and issues related to waste management and proposed the development of a regulatory framework in close cooperation with the private sector. Within it, a suggestion was to undertake a rapid assessment of the technical and financial needs of those fish producers who are obliged to introduce closed-water systems by 2024 in order to support their transition without damaging production or neglecting the use of natural resources.

As fish producers, while we promote the effective use of water resources, we also face great challenges and shortcomings in the waste management system, as more coordinated actions between different state authorities, as well as between the public and private sectors are needed, said Mr. Mher Serobyan, founder of "Serobyan Mher" IE fish farm and member of the Fish Producers' Association.

Speaking about waste management in fisheries, the User Guide was approved by Ministerial Order No 262-d to regulate fish waste management and to boost recycled and by-products (oils, protein concentrate, fish albumin, amino acids and so on) from the fishery sector. These newly established requirements might seem challenging, but they can be quickly turned into an advantage for the stakeholders along the fish supply chains and can contribute to a sound environment, as well as competitive and sustainable enterprises. The available technologies are also on the side of fish producers, as they can help turn waste into highly valued by-products. However, the successful implementation of the necessary changes calls for cooperation among businesses, service providers, academia, and regulatory bodies to support sectoral development. It also calls for cross-cutting approaches to support sustainable and inclusive solutions. Here, UNIDO is building on its broad experience in the fisheries sector and utilises a holistic approach to engage actors on multiple levels, simultaneously.

Background

The "European Union for Environment" (EU4Environment – Green Economy) Action helps the Eastern Partnership countries preserve their natural capital and increase people's environmental well-being, by supporting environment-related action, demonstrating and unlocking opportunities for greener growth, and setting mechanisms to better manage environmental risks and impacts.

It is funded by the European Union and implemented by five Partner organizations - OECD, UNECE, UNEP, UNIDO, and the World Bank – over the 2019-2024 period, with a budget of EUR 20 million. For more information about the Action, please visit: www.eu4environment.org. For more information about RECP in Armenia, please visit: www.recp.am

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³ Source: <https://www.fao.org/3/i2103e/i2103e00.pdf>

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