

Aquaculture

EU lifts ban on animal proteins in fish feed

By Ed Bray | Thursday 14 February 2013

The EU's fish farmers will be allowed to use processed animal proteins (PAPs) in fish feed for the first time since 2001. This could pave the way for a further overhaul of restrictions on pig and poultry feed. The European Commission's relevant regulation entered into force on 13 February.

A total ban on PAPs in animal feed was introduced in the wake of the bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) epidemic, also known as the mad cow disease, largely caused by the use of bovine meat and bone meal as cattle feed. The Commission's plans will allow the use of PAPs from non-ruminant animals (pigs and poultry) in fishmeal from June. Officials say the move follows scientific advice showing "negligible" risk of BSE transmission between non-ruminant animals, provided that intra-species recycling (cannibalism) is prevented.

The move, coming at a time of high feed costs and widespread scarcity of fishmeal, will improve the overall sustainability of the aquaculture sector, Commission officials said. A strict traceability system with DNA testing will prevent the cross-contamination of feed for species other than fish, they added. But concerns over these safeguards prompted both Germany and France to reject the lifting of the ban, while the UK abstained in the vote last July. Patrick Vanden Avenne, president of the European Compound Feed Manufacturers' Federation, said that "the new measure contributes to global food security by reducing the EU dependency on seafood imports, which account for more than 70% of the current EU consumption".

The Commission says the move marks the first step towards re-introducing PAPs in pig and poultry feed, provided testing can rule out cannibalism. But it has no intention to propose the re-authorisation of PAPs for ruminant animals or to allow PAPs from ruminants in feed for non-ruminants, they said.