Aquaculture Advisory Council

Farm to Fork Strategy

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The Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC) gratefully acknowledges EU funding support.

The Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC) welcomes the European Commission's Farm to Fork strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system (COM(2020), 381 final). The AAC has discussed the strategy, and this recommendation summarizes the position of the AAC.

Framework for sustainable aquaculture:

1. Recognizes the strategic intent that the transition to a sustainable food system will deliver affordable foods, improve the incomes of primary producers, improve environmental and animal welfare outcomes and reinforce the EU's competitiveness.

2. Calls on the Commission to substantiate the claim that human and financial investments in new solutions for aquaculture promise higher returns by creating added value and reducing costs.

3. Stresses that sustainable growth must be based on business investment predictability and legal certainty.

4. Welcomes an action plan for organic aquaculture involving promotion campaigns and green public procurement, recognizes that the Strategic Guidelines and the action plan for organic aquaculture shall play an active role in eliminating the bottlenecks for growth in organic aquaculture, supports a 'significant increase in organic aquaculture' by 2030 to ensure that organic aquaculture keeps pace with the Farm to Fork objective for organic agricultural land.

5. Stresses the need to also support and promote greater sustainability in aquaculture, which is essential to improving the EU's aquatic food self-sufficiency.

6. Stresses that expansion of sustainable marine aquaculture (e.g. extractive aquaculture) could help alleviate the land constraint relative to other animal-based foods and their associated emissions from land-use change[1].

[1] World Resources Institute, Creating a sustainable food future, p. 297, 2019.

7. Urges the Commission to provide a definition for sustainable aquaculture and to propose a supporting legislative framework vis-à-vis organic aquaculture and encourages member states to allocate more space to sustainable aquaculture.

8. Stresses the importance of recognizing and supporting unfed forms of aquaculture, such as algae, shellfish and IMTA pond fish farming, as important parts of the circular economy and net contributors to nutrient removal through high-quality protein.

9. Highlights the need for further public support to mitigate the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic on the EU market of fishery and aquaculture products.

Ensuring sustainable food production:

10. Supports fostering EU-grown plant proteins and alternative feed materials such as insects, marine feed stocks (e.g. algae) and bio-economy bi-products (e.g. fish by-products).

11. Acknowledges the concern over antimicrobial resistance linked to the use of antimicrobials in animal and human healthcare; policies should ensure responsible use.

12. Stresses that access to safe and effective veterinary medicines is essential to aquaculture and that the sector is concerned about the future availability of medicines, points to the need for more effective vaccines and emphasizes the differences in the use of antimicrobials across Member States.

13. Agrees that consumers pay increasing attention to fish welfare and that better welfare improves animal health and food quality, reduces the need for medication and can help preserve biodiversity and supports the ambition to ensure higher welfare throughout the life cycle, including breeding, rearing, transport and slaughter.

14. Notes that overall emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) per kg of edible fish flesh at farm gate from finfish aquaculture is similar to pig meat and broiler meat and that bivalves, algae and seaweed have the lowest emissions, as they rely on natural food from their environment and encourages further development of aquaculture systems with low GHG

emissions[2].

15. Calls for references to the overall objectives in the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) Regulation (promotion of a sustainable and competitive aquaculture that creates growth and jobs) to FAO (close the demand-supply gap) and the recent 'Food from the Oceans' report from the Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM)[3] that points to the need for a 'food from the ocean paradigm (the greatest and most feasible potential lies in marine aquaculture, notably herbivore filter feeders like molluscs and cultivated algae), to the European Commission's 'Recipe for Change' report[4] ('aquatic production should double' in order to 'create a resource-smart food system with 50% lower greenhouse gas emissions by 2030') and to the World Resources Report, 'Creating a sustainable food future'[5] (expanding sustainable aquaculture).

16. Proposes highlighting the importance of increasing awareness of the social, economic, environmental and animal welfare aspects of the sector.

17. Supports initiatives to reduce dependence on long-haul transportation and refers to the need to close the gap between consumption and production of sustainable seafood in the EU.

18. Emphasizes that sustainable aquaculture can contribute to ensuring long-term food and nutrition security as well as growth and employment for EU citizens and highlights that aquaculture production could offer dynamic opportunities to young farmers and fishers, enabling synergies between terrestrial and aquatic food production systems.

19. Supports developing a contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security to be put in place in times of crisis and emphasizes that the plan must include aquaculture.

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[2] Macleod et al., Quantifying greenhouse gas emissions from global aquaculture, Nature Scientific Reports (2020) 10.
[3] Food from the oceans - How can more food and biomass be obtained from the oceans in a way that does not deprive future generations of their benefits? https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/0e91f9db-f4f2-11e7-be11-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-94584065
[4] Recipe for change - An agenda for a climate-smart and sustainable food system for a healthy Europe : report of the FOOD 2030 expert group. https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d0c725de-6f7c-11e8-9483-01aa75ed71a1/language-en
[5] Creating a Sustainable Food Future - https://www.wri.org/research/creating-sustainable-food-future

20. Supports empowering consumers to make informed, healthy and sustainable food choices and creating a framework for sustainable labelling.

21. Underlines that promoting sustainable food consumption and facilitating the shift to healthy, sustainable diets requires more sustainably produced seafood and vegetables.

22. Stresses the importance that all initiatives achieve their objectives in the most effective and least burdensome way.

Enabling the transition

23. Agrees that R&D can contribute to the transition, stresses the need for a regulatory framework that supports sustainable aquaculture growth[6], reiterates the need for a definition of sustainable aquaculture and recommends aligning R&D priorities with issues from the definition on sustainable aquaculture.

24. Calls on the European Commission to support the development of result-oriented research projects under the Horizon Europe programme (e.g. Pillar II, Cluster 6) and its dedicated Mission areas (e.g. Healthy oceans, seas, coastal and inland waters), the European Regional Development Fund (e.g. Interreg Europe), and so on.

Promoting the global transition

25. Calls for imported aquaculture products to be required to meet the same sustainability standards that EU operators must meet and points to the fact that there is no level playing field in this domain and that distortions of competition are a serious problem for EU operators.

[6] Compassion in World Farming and Eurogroup for Animals support sustainable aquaculture development, not growth.

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