



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE/A2/EG (2021)

Dear Mr. Ojeda,

Thank you for your letter of 25 March 2021 with the recommendation of the Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC) on the climate footprint of the EU food system. I appreciate the efforts of the AAC in providing us with advice on different aspects relevant to aquaculture.

I believe that the Commission has taken into consideration most of the concerns raised and recommendations made in the context of our key policies and strategies.

As indicated in your recommendation, the European Green Deal sets out how to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. The Farm to Fork Strategy is at the heart of the European Green Deal aiming to make food systems fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly. It lays down a new approach to ensure that agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, as well as the food value chain contribute appropriately to achieve the increased GHG emission reduction targets as established by the Climate Law¹.

Furthermore, the Strategy foresees a number of actions that aim at improving the sustainability of fish and seafood, or increasing the transparency of sustainability aspects. Among others, the Commission is considering to introduce a sustainability element in the revision of the current marketing standards for fisheries and aquaculture products. This could help to provide information about certain environmental and social sustainability aspects to operators in the supply chain and to consumers. The revised standards would apply to both EU products and imports. Moreover, the Commission is working through

¹ Commission proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality and amending Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 (European Climate Law), COM (2020) 80 final, 2020/0036 (COD).

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its external action (participation in multilateral fora like the FAO, targeting development cooperation to raising sustainability, negotiating relevant provisions in our agreements with third countries) to raise the sustainability standards of food production (including through aquaculture) worldwide.

The Action Plan of the Farm to Fork strategy also foresees the proposal for a **sustainable food labelling framework** to empower consumers to make sustainable food choices.

Last but not least, the Strategy addresses your 7th recommendation in the section 2.1 related to ensuring sustainable food production; *inter alia*, the Commission is working on an initiative to support the production, safe consumption and innovative use of algae in the EU, which should also support the use of algae as an alternative feed ingredient.

Regarding your recommendations 2 and 8, as you know the European Commission has adopted new Strategic Guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021-2030². These guidelines acknowledge that the sector has a particular role to play in contributing to the transition to sustainable food systems, but also to the development of the bioeconomy and the circular economy (through the use of renewable aquatic resources). It is also worth referring to the guide produced by FARNET on integrating the circular economy in fisheries and aquaculture³.

In the same way, the Guidelines call for the sector to minimise any negative contribution to climate change. In addition, they refer to the need of dedicated sectoral adaptation strategies to climate change addressing the aquaculture sector specifically.

Concerning your 3rd recommendation, the Commission is indeed supporting the development of new forms of energy efficiency and energy production, including in aquaculture activities. The new strategic guidelines include promoting the use of renewable energy sources and greater energy efficiency as one of the aspects to be addressed in order to increase the environmental performance of EU aquaculture. In addition to the potential of multi-use of the marine space for marine renewable energy and aquaculture, the Commission sees promising technological solutions being developed with offshore wind, solar PV, tidal and wave energy to power aquaculture installations offshore or battery for service vessels in aquaculture. The EU offshore renewable energy strategy adopted in November 2020 highlights the potential of emerging technologies and the need to accelerate research and innovation and commercially viable projects, including potential coupling with aquaculture.

Finally, regarding your 4th recommendation, I would like to point to the Communication (COM (2008) 400) "Public procurement for a better environment". This communication defines Green Public Procurement (GPP) and provides it as a voluntary instrument to Member States and public authorities that can determine the extent to which they implement it. Furthermore, last October, the Commission published new voluntary EU GPP criteria for food, catering services and vending machines.

² COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS - Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030 SWD(2021) 102 final– 12.05.2021.

³ https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/library/farnet-guide-17-circular-economy-fisheries-and-aquaculture-areas_en

I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Pascale COLSON, coordinator of the Advisory Councils (Pascale.COLSON@ec.europa.eu; +32.2.295.62.73), who will forward it to relevant colleagues.

Yours sincerely,

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