



Recommendations on the CFP/CMO targeted consultations

AAC 2022-11

March 2022



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





Index

Index 2
Recommendations on the CFP/CMO targeted consultations 3



Recommendations on the CFP/CMO targeted consultations

Article 4 in The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU, 2012) provides for shared competence between the Union and its member states on several “*principal areas*”, including agriculture and fisheries. Following this, article 38 of the TFEU stipulates that the Union shall define and implement a common agriculture and fisheries policy. The common fisheries policy (CFP) originally formed part of the common agricultural policy (CAP), but it developed a separate identity in 1970. Aquaculture was included in the CFP in 2013, but it was not defined as a principal area in the TFEU. This is reflected on the Commission’s website on the CFP: “*The current CFP focuses on the management of fisheries, and it includes aquaculture.*”¹

There are marked differences in the overarching policy approach between the CAP and the CFP, reflecting the fact that fishery is a hunting activity on a common property and agriculture is a farming activity. Thus, the CAP aims, *inter alia*, to increase agricultural productivity, whereas the CFP aims to preserve fish stocks/manage fisheries and promote sustainable aquaculture.

The CAP specifically aims to 1. Support farmers and improve agricultural productivity, ensuring a stable supply of affordable food; 2. Safeguard EU farmers’ ability to make a reasonable living; 3. Help tackle climate change and the sustainable management of natural resources; 4. Maintain rural areas and landscapes across the EU and 5. Keep the rural economy alive by promoting jobs in farming, agri-food industries and associated sectors.

The CAP offers support to farmers because² 1. Farming is a risky and often costly business; 2. Agriculture is more dependent on the weather and climate than other sectors; 3. There is an inevitable time gap between consumer demand and farmers being able to increase supply; 4. EU farmers are under pressure due to increasing global trade in food products and trade liberalisation; 5. Developments in global markets increase competition and 6. Globalisation and fluctuations in supply and demand have made agricultural market prices more volatile in recent years, adding to farmers’ concerns. These business uncertainties regarding agriculture justify the important role the public sector plays in ensuring a safety net for farmers in terms of income.

The CFP references to aquaculture, on the other hand, only include non-binding Union strategic guidelines, Member States’ multiannual national strategic plans, the open method of coordination and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF).

Aquaculture is a farming activity that is conceptually similar to agriculture. Certainly, it is not a hunting activity, as capture fisheries are.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/policy/common-fisheries-policy-cfp_en#ecl-inpage-567

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/income-support/income-support-explained_en



The Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC) holds that the current stagnation in the development of a sustainable EU aquaculture is a direct consequence of such a non-binding approach. Moreover, CFP measures for aquaculture are insufficient and business uncertainties and arguments that underpin CAP support for agriculture are, *mutatis mutandis*, also applicable to aquaculture. The position of aquaculture should be improved, and it should be given the same policy priority, as a principal area, as the two other primary food-production systems: agriculture and fisheries.

The EU Farm-to-Fork Strategy foresees the development of a legislative framework for sustainable food systems to facilitate and accelerate the transition toward a sustainable EU food system. The Joint Research Centre (JRC) has explored potential building blocks of such a legislative initiative³. The JRC proposes that sustainability should include economic, environmental, social, resilience and ethical dimensions and notes that European demand for fish and seafood is largely met through imports and that sustainable 'blue foods', meaning sustainable aquatic food, could be a cornerstone of a sustainable food system.

Sustainable EU aquaculture can play an important role in delivering public goods. These public goods include (I) nutritious and healthy food with a limited environmental footprint, (II) economic development and job opportunities for coastal and rural communities, (III) reducing pollution, (IV) preserving ecosystems and biodiversity, (V) providing ecosystem services, (VI) ensuring good animal welfare for fish and other sentient aquatic animals and (VII) contributing to the fight against climate change. This Commission aims for EU aquaculture to become a reference as a sector that is resilient, competitive and a global standard in terms of sustainability and quality⁴.

In this regard, the AAC has the following recommendations for the revision of the CFP/CMO:

1. The long-term objectives regarding EU aquaculture should be recognition as a principal area in the TFEU, and a standalone common aquaculture policy should be developed.
2. In the meantime, the CFP should be renamed the common fishery and aquaculture policy (CFAP)
3. The CFAP could have similar aims for aquaculture as the CAP for agriculture, amended with the particular aim of sustainable production growth by adding coastal areas, as well as replacing the term 'agri-food industries' with 'aqua-food industries'. The objective of this growth will not necessarily be increasing average EU aquatic food consumption but, rather, providing the Single market with more sustainable farmed fish, replacing imports and providing better food security for the EU.
4. The CFAP should be aligned with the Green Deal and the TFEU by incorporating an objective that ensures the welfare of fish and other sentient animals. Animal welfare is a vital ethical dimension. Article 13 of the TFEU insists that, in formulating and implementing the Union's

³ Concepts for a sustainable EU food system, JRC, February 2022

⁴ Strategic guidelines for EU aquaculture for the period from 2021 to 2030, COM (2021) – 236 final guidelines.

fisheries policies, 'the Union and the Member States shall, since animals are sentient beings, pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals.'

5. Priority should be given to including an Eco Scheme, Areas Facing Natural Constraints (ANCs) and an organic Farming Scheme for aquaculture in the CFAP and, subsequently, schemes for Early-Stage Support for Producer Organisations, On-farm Capital Investment, Complimentary Income Support for Young Farmers and a Knowledge-Transfer Programme.
6. The alignment and coherence of the CFAP objectives on aquaculture with EU environmental regulations and directives is a key challenge, and the level of coherence between different EU policies should be assessed on a sector-by-sector basis, particularly the protection of shellfish waters as stipulated in Annex IV.1;ii of the Water Framework Directive⁵.
7. The CFAP should clearly define sustainable aquaculture with a set of indicators and corresponding thresholds for sustainability (economic, environmental, social, resilience and ethical dimensions), as well as aquaculture vessels and the registration of such vessels⁶.
8. Considering that more than half of aquatic food products consumed in the EU are imported from countries outside the EU, special attention should be played to ensuring a level playing field with imports. An indicator of self-sufficiency on aquatic foods should be included in the resilience dimension of the CFAP.
9. A chapter on sustainable aquaculture and ensuring a level playing field should be included in all bilateral trade agreements, allowing for the enforcement of sustainability standards for exported and imported aquatic foods⁷.
10. Key strategic guidelines for aquaculture should be included in the CFAP.
11. Member State authorities involved with aquaculture should be better trained, and transparent decision-making criteria should be established to ensure that more objective and science-based decisions are made.
12. Ensure that EMFAF funding aimed at supporting aquaculture producers' initiatives to move their activities down the value chain and deliver their products directly to the consumers does not create unfair competition with established seafood retailers.

⁵ AAC recommendation on the coherence of zones concerning shellfish waters (December 2021):

https://aac-europe.org/images/jdownloads/Recommendations/EN/AAC_Recommendation_-_Coherence_of_zones_concerning_shellfish_farming_2022_01.pdf

⁶ AAC recommendation on the control regulation (March 2019):

https://aac-europe.org/images/Control_Regulation_Advice.pdf

⁷ 'Sustainability criteria for fisheries and aquaculture products in CMO', STECF report, 2021



In relation to the CMO, the AAC refers to previous recommendations 2021-03 on consumer information⁸, 2022-03 on producer organisations⁹ and 2022-02 on a level playing field¹⁰.

⁸ AAC recommendation on consumer information (March 2021) :

https://aac-europe.org/images/jdownloads/AAC_Recommendation_-_Consumer_Information_2021_03.pdf

⁹ AAC recommendation on the role of Producers' Organisations in the Sustainable Development of Aquaculture (December 2021):

https://aac-europe.org/images/jdownloads/Recommendations/EN/AAC_Recommendation_-_Role_of_POs_2022_03.pdf

¹⁰ AAC Recommendation on achieving greater sustainability standards of imported aquaculture products and a level playing field (December 2021):

https://aac-europe.org/images/jdownloads/Recommendations/EN/AAC_Recommendation_-_Achieving_a_level-playing_field_2022_02.pdf



Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC)

Rue Montoyer 31, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

Tel: +32 (0) 2 720 00 73

E-mail: secretariat@aac-europe.org

Twitter: @aac_europe

www.aac-europe.org