



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE.D.3/MMM

Dear Mr Thomsen,

Thank you for the “*Recommendation on Marine Action Plan, Nature Restoration Law and Mapping shellfish dredging*” of August 2024, and for collecting and providing therein detailed information on shellfish dredging activities in different EU Member States.

In this recommendation, you conclude that shellfish farming dredging should be outside the scope of the Marine Action Plan and the Nature Restoration Law, and that a detailed study should be designed and funded by the Commission to analyse the process of shellfish dredging to increase the knowledge in this field.

As you know, the Marine Action Plan was adopted with the intention of serving as a bridge between the environment and fisheries policies and the responsible authorities, to the benefit of resilient marine ecosystems.

After its adoption, it has been clarified multiple times, that the Action Plan does not envisage a total ban of mobile bottom contacting activities. Rather, it is a call from the Commission to the Member States to put in place the measures needed to contribute to the environmental legislation and fully exploit the synergies between the common fisheries policy and the environmental legislation. In this respect the Commission calls for a gradual transition to less damage to the seabed, especially in the most sensitive marine areas and is urging Member States to take concrete action, relying on research and innovation, that will bring real improvements.

It is indeed essential to note that the Action Plan deliberately leaves the realisation of the objectives and the choice of measures in the hand of national authorities. In this manner, the national and regional particularities can be taken on board. The Action Plan invites to adopt national measures or - when it involves more than one Member State - to submit joint recommendations (using the regionalisation, as introduced by the common fisheries policy (CFP)) with the measures proposed. Therefore, we encourage stakeholders to work jointly with the national authorities to frame the shellfish dredging activity without compromising a sustainable use of resources.

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Last, but not least, let me remind that this Action Plan underlines the need for Member States to accompany the transition and, where necessary, make full use of the funding possibilities.

The recently adopted Nature Restoration Regulation plays an important role in the protection and restoration of marine and coastal habitats, among other listed ecosystems. It requires Member States to put in place measures for restoring degraded ecosystems by 2050 and by 2030 for at least 20% of EU seas. Nature restoration does not imply stopping economic activity in ecosystems being restored, but it is primarily about living and producing more respectfully towards nature.

It is for Member States to come up with their strategic planning through the national restoration plans to be submitted to the Commission within two years from the entry into force of the Regulation. Where fishing and aquaculture activities are to be regulated, the CFP applies, and Member States should make use of the tools provided in the CFP. The determination of the most suitable areas for restoration measures should be based on the best available knowledge and latest scientific evidence.

I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Julia Rubeck, our Advisory Councils coordinator, via the functional mailbox MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu.

Yours sincerely,

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