



AAC Recommendation on framing new EU financial tools to support good husbandry practices in shellfish farming

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I. Background

In its Strategic Guidelines for a Sustainable and Competitive Aquaculture by 2030, the European Commission emphasised the importance of defining and promoting good husbandry practices (GHP) in aquaculture, including shellfish farming. In this context, **the Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC) adopted a first recommendation in 2023¹** aimed at **clarifying and sharing these practices for shellfish farming**, especially regarding public and animal health, and the quality of production waters.

This initial step **must now be strengthened through tailored financial instruments** to ensure GHPs' widespread dissemination and implementation. This requires developing robust mechanisms at the EU level and in each Member State based on enhanced institutional coordination, capacity building for administrations, and effective networks for outreach to professionals.

As preparations begin for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (2028–2034), which foresees a possible simplification and better integration of funding programmes through enhanced coordination or a common framework, it is strategic to integrate key themes, such as support for extensive sustainable aquaculture farming practices—including shellfish farming—as a priority criterion. This proactive approach will help secure specific budget lines of interest and optimise the use of European funding to support the sustainability, innovation, and resilience of the aquaculture sector despite multiple challenges ahead.

This recommendation aims to facilitate the creation of a framework in which technical assistance, budgetary planning, and financial tools could converge to ensure the sustainability, competitiveness, and resilience of European bivalve mollusc farming. The suggestions here do not preclude reciprocity for other forms of aquaculture.

II. Justification

Implementing GHPs requires producers to make significant investments, such as climate change adaptation, purification systems, animal and public health monitoring, and control systems and the mechanisation or diversification of their activities. However, these economic efforts far exceed the financial individual capacities of shellfish farming exploitation, which is mainly carried out by SMEs and micro-enterprises.

To this end, the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF), managed according to the national and regional priorities expressed in each Member State's "Multiannual National Strategic Plans," has been used by the shellfish industry, while other funds (i.e., Horizon, Interreg, Life) that could also support GHP dissemination and implementation have been underutilised by the shellfish sector due to their overcomplex and unsuitable setting for professional structures. Simplifying and better targeting these financial instruments is therefore essential for enabling their full mobilisation.

¹ [*Good Husbandry Practices in shellfish farming*](#) – Aquaculture Advisory Council -11-2023

Furthermore, other targeted financing opportunities have not been sufficiently leveraged by the sector (i.e., Horizon). The recent report commissioned by the [European Investment Bank \(EIB\) and the Global Seaweed Coalition](#) (EIB, 2025)² confirms the existence of financing options—particularly through debt—to support the sustainable development of seaweed and bivalve sectors in **Europe, including various GHPs** (i.e., basin buildings, mechanisation).

In conclusion, given the multiple constraints (environmental, climatic, and structural) facing the shellfish farming sector, it is essential for the EU and its Member States to strengthen the mobilisation and coordination of all available financial means and instruments. Support for primary aquaculture sectors, notably shellfish farming GHPs, must be integrated coherently into the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) at the EU level and in related “Multiannual National Strategic Plans” at the Member States level. This framework should enable an optimal combination of public funding (EMFAF, Horizon Europe, LIFE), EIB financial instruments, private funds, and public-private partnerships to ensure the flexibility and adaptability needed by the sector. Such coordination would help maximise the efficiency and visibility of EU action in favour of sustainable shellfish and low-trophic aquaculture farming.

At the same time, the structured dissemination of GHPs remains a strategic objective. To date, the [Aquaculture Assistance Mechanism \(AAM\)](#) is the most advanced European tool in this regard. However, to reach its full potential, the platform must be consolidated and strengthened to improve the integration, sharing, and transferability of identified practices among Member States.

III. Recommendations

AAC recommendations:

To the European Commission

- 1. Strengthen the Aquaculture Assistance Mechanism (AAM)**
The AAC recommends reinforcing the AAM as a practical and participatory platform that **supports the dissemination and financing of GHPs in shellfish farming**, ensuring the effective involvement of producers, research bodies, and administrations.
- 2. Integrate targeted support for shellfish GHPs in the post-2027 MFF**
The AAC invites the Commission to include dedicated measures for extensive and non-fed shellfish farming in future EU funding instruments and to encourage Member States to set measurable objectives for GHP implementation in their national strategic plans.
- 3. Operationalise the EIB recommendations from [EIB Unlocking the Potential of Europe's Seaweed and Bivalve Industries Report](#)**

² Financing opportunities for EIB in support of sustainable seaweed and bivalve sectors in the EU, and criteria to ensure their sustainability – European Investment Bank (EIB)

The AAC recommends rapidly building on the findings of the 2025 EIB report to design concrete and accessible financial instruments tailored to the needs of shellfish and seaweed farmers.

- 4. Recognise the ecosystem services provided by shellfish farming**
The AAC encourages the Commission to acknowledge the environmental services delivered by shellfish farming and to consider the latter as a basis for developing results-based financial incentives and payment schemes supporting shellfish GHPs.
- 5. Facilitate access to EU funding for shellfish producers**
The AAC invites the Commission and Member States to simplify procedures and improve guidance to ensure that shellfish farmers can effectively access available financial instruments supporting GHPs.
- 6. Develop monitoring indicators for GHP-related investments**
The AAC recommends establishing indicators to monitor and evaluate the use and impact of EU funds dedicated to GHPs in shellfish farming, improving transparency and accountability.
- 7. Enhance coordination between EU funding programmes**
The AAC encourages the Commission to strengthen synergies between funding instruments (EMFAF, LIFE, Horizon Europe, Interreg, EIB) to ensure coherent and complementary support for shellfish GHPs.

To the EU Member States

- 8. Contribute to the AAM's development and implementation**
The AAC invites Member States to cooperate actively in improving the AAM, sharing GHPs from national shellfish programmes and ensuring its continuous update.
- 9. Simplify access to EU and national funding**
The AAC recommends that Member States streamline administrative procedures and enhance coordination between managing authorities and producer organisations to facilitate access to financial support for GHPs.



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