



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE.A.2/BVT

Subject: AAC Recommendation on blue crab emergency in Italy

Dear Mr Brian Thomsen,

I would like to thank you for your mail of 30th October 2025 including the “*Recommendation on blue crab emergency in Italy*”.

Firstly, I would like to recall that the Strategic guidelines for EU aquaculture ⁽¹⁾ recognise the challenge that predators pose to the profitability of aquaculture producers and announce that the Commission will prepare a document mapping good practices on the management of conflicts with predators. This was also announced in the “*European Ocean pact*” adopted by the Commission in May 2025. This document on predators will provide recommendations and good practices on managing conflicts with the main predators having an impact on the EU aquaculture sector including on blue crab. The EU Aquaculture Assistance Mechanism started recently to work on this document.

In the Recommendation on blue crab emergency in Italy, the Aquaculture Advisory Council specifically calls upon the European Commission to:

- 1) ***Create an EU coordination unit with shared management among the various Directorate Generals and with decision-making capacity regarding the management of the impacts of invasive alien species on aquaculture and ecosystems.***

The Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) works closely with the Directorate-General for Environment (DG ENV), who are the main responsible service for the management of the impacts of invasive alien species (IAS) in ecosystems. DG ENV, together with other Directorates-General of the Commission, is part of an

⁽¹⁾ COM (2021) 236 final

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interservice group on EU aquaculture policy established following the publication of the Strategic guidelines for EU aquaculture in 2021.

In the context of the preparation of the regular updates of the List of invasive alien species of Union concern (article 4 of Regulation 1143/2014), all relevant Commission services are consulted on the list of species to be included in the Commission's proposal for an update of the Union List. This was also the case for the 4th update of the Union List (Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2025/1422) in the context of which *Callinectes Sapidus* was not listed. DG ENV, through a contract, continually prepares risk assessments for species as a basis for considering whether or not they should be proposed for listing. DG ENV is always open to discuss with other Commission services potentially invasive alien species to be risk-assessed.

- 2) ***Create an EU coordination unit with shared management among the various DGs and with decision-making capacity regarding the management of the impacts of climate change on aquaculture and ecosystems.***

The European Commission is preparing the European climate resilience framework, led by DG CLIMA, to set out an integrated framework to support EU countries in ensuring that the action taken measures up to the scale of the challenges ahead. A Call for Evidence has been published with the deadline of 23 February 2026 and we invite you to submit your position.

Additionally, in implementing the objectives of the strategic guidelines on EU aquaculture, the European Commission has published a Staff Working Document on the adaptation of EU aquaculture to climate change aiming to support the Member States and the industry in creating Climate Adaptation Plans. This document suggests processes for creating adaptation plans, identifies climate-change impacts, as well as possible adaptation measures and good practices that can be applied for building resilience to climate change.

- 3) ***Review the regulatory and policy framework for the prevention and management of invasive alien species in the light of the biodiversity strategy and climate change adaptation with regard to:***

- *Reviewing Articles 7 and 8 of the Regulation (EU) 1143/2014, making a distinction between alien species introduced accidentally or deliberately to enable managing emergencies effectively without adding unnecessary constraints.*
- *Updating the 'list of invasive alien species of Union concern' annually, making the registration procedure transparent and efficient.*
- *Developing the concept of 'post-disaster emergency' with related tools such as 'solidarity funds' and 'insurance' to ensure the perpetuity of productive sectors affected by emergency situations. With climate crises becoming increasingly frequent, EU climate change policies can no longer be limited to adaptation strategies.*

The most direct impact of Regulation (EU) 1143/2014 is that listed species are subject to the restrictions under Article 7, which includes a trade ban. These restrictions are essential to the Regulation's effectiveness in preventing the introduction and the spread of invasive alien species included on the Union List. It is not clear why this article is considered to pose a problem in the management of *Callinectes Sapidus* or *Portunus segnis* as the two species are currently not included in the Union List.

More generally, it is important not to look at Article 7 of Regulation (EU) 1143/2014 in isolation. Exceptions to most restrictions are possible in certain cases: either (i) under a

system of permits managed by the Member States (allowing for research or *ex-situ* conservation activities under Article 8); or (ii) authorised by the Commission (in exceptional cases for reasons of compelling public interest under Article 9). Other transitional derogations are possible for owners of companion animals (Article 31) and for commercial stocks (Article 32).

It is also useful to highlight Article 19 of the Regulation, which deals with the management of invasive alien species that are widely spread in a Member State's territory. While this Article imposes a management obligation, it is up to the Member State concerned, based on an analysis of costs and benefits, to select among the several options listed in Article 19 those measures most appropriate to the local conditions.

As regards the potential commercialisation of these species, Article 19(2) states that 'The commercial use of already established invasive alien species may be temporarily allowed as part of the management measures aimed at their eradication, population control or containment, under strict justification and provided that all appropriate controls are in place to avoid any further spread'. Thus, if a Member State introduces a specific management programme for widely spread invasive alien species that are suitable for human consumption, then the export to other Member States of dead animals would be allowed provided all the conditions in Article 19(2) are met.

As regards the suggestion to update annually the list of invasive alien species of Union concern, this would increase administrative burden, lower the quality of necessary risk assessments and the necessary consultation of stakeholders. Furthermore, if Member States perceive a new invasive alien species as an imminent threat, they can take emergency measures under Article 10 of the Regulation.

The current approach to updating the list of invasive alien species of Union concern is transparent and efficient: prior to a species being included in the Union List, its risk assessment is examined and declared fit for purpose by the Scientific Forum, made up of experts appointed by the Member States, before they are presented to the Member States in the relevant Committee. As part of this process, there is a public consultation where any feedback, including additional evidence, can be shared by any person or organisation.

Furthermore, I would like to recall also that Annex I of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), whose objective is to achieve a good environmental status (GES) in EU marine regions, includes Descriptor 2, which is relevant to non-indigenous species: "Non-Indigenous Species introduced by human activities are at levels that do not adversely alter the ecosystem".

Moreover, the Commission, within the framework of European Ocean Pact, will also promote a dedicated policy initiative on addressing the issue of Non-Indigenous Species threatening fisheries and aquaculture, including opportunities for making use of these species in cases where those species are too spread already.

The European Commission also works closely with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), notably on the topic of invasive alien species. The GFCM 2030 strategy emphasises the importance of preventing and mitigating the threat of these species. In this context, the GFCM is currently leading a research programme on Blue crabs, in which Italy participates, aiming to set up a coordinated science-based framework for the sustainable management of blue crab fisheries.

- 4) ***Establish a permanent monitoring platform for climate change impacts at the EU level based on the data provided by the Copernicus system, as foreseen in the Ocean Pact.***

The Commission will reflect on your recommendation. Meanwhile, it is noted that monitoring practices, including examples to this effect, are included in the SWD on climate change adaptation mentioned above.

- 5) ***Develop a reporting mechanism with member states and producers' associations to provide stakeholders with up-to-date insights on recent production trends, complementary to the Eurostat data and STECF reports that are 2–3 years behind.***

The Commission is working towards having more timely data through the new European Fisheries and Aquaculture Statistics (EFAS) regulation and the STECF economic report on EU aquaculture.

- 6) ***Support research in the context of short/medium-term strategies for immediate response and in the context of long-term strategies for the relaunch of productions and capitalise experience on both alien species and climate change impacts.***

DG MARE will consider including these topics in future EU funded Research and Innovation work programmes. Please note also that the Italian EMFAF Programme includes the possibility to finance projects related to blue crab and other invasive alien species. The EMFAF can be best used to finance studies and research, for example for mapping the impact of blue crab, or to develop innovative solutions to increase the resilience of the sector.

I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Julia RUBECK, coordinator of the Advisory Councils (MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu; +32.2.296.88.89), who will forward them to the relevant colleagues.

Yours sincerely,

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