Multi-AC advice on the "Maritime sector – a green post-COVID future" Roadmap

Background

In December 2019, the European Commission published its action plan to make the EU's economy sustainable, the European Green Deal[1], which will have an important effect, especially on fisheries management and seafood trade. It sets out the Commission's commitment to tackling climate and environment related challenges with a view to implementing a new growth strategy for a resource-efficient and competitive economy. The main objectives of the Green Deal are no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050, economic growth decoupled from resource use, and the promise of leaving no person or place behind. Included in its key actions is the alignment of all new Commission initiatives in line with the objectives of the Green Deal and promoting innovation.

As part of this, the Commisioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries was tasked with developing a new approach on the Blue Economy by EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in order to make the Blue Economy sustainable and make it an integral part of the EU Green Deal.

The EU Blue Economy Report 2020[2] states that "the Blue Economy inlcudes all those activties that are marine-based or marine-related" and identifies seven established sectors: marine living resources, marine non-living resources, marine renewable energy, port activities, shipbuilding and repair, maritime transport and coastal tourism. In 2018, these established sectors generated approx. €750 billion in turnover and employed close to 5 million people.

The seafood sector is one of the main contributors to the Blue Economy as the EU is the largest market in the world for seafood, with an estimated value of €55 billion and a volume of 12 million tons.[3] In its economic analysis of the EU fish processing industry (link), the European Commission states that "Besides contributing to the availability of food supplies for consumers, the fisheries

[1] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, The European Green Deal, COM/2019/640 final (link)

[2] https://blueindicators.ec.europa.eu/published-reports_en

[3] PrimeFish (link) accessed November 2020

sector plays an important role in providing a fair standard of living for coastal communities, which are often located in rural areas where few economic alternatives exist. In this context, the fish processing industry acquires particular economic relevance given its significant contribution to the blue economy in the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth."

In 2018 Bord Iascaigh Mhara, the Irish Seafood Development Agency, concluded that "on average the ancillary multiplier for the fishing sector in the European Union to be 0.3 FTE for every 1 FTE engaged in fishing activity while the aquaculture sector had a higher multiplier of 0.6 due to the more specialised equipment required."[4] The European seafood sector not only generates direct employment, for example in fisheries, aquaculture and processing, indirect employment through firms supplying and servicing this sector, but it also induces employment across other economic sectors catering for the seafood workforce. Bord Iascaigh Mhara continued its detailed economic analysis of the seafood sector in Ireland throughout 2019 by examining its impact on the ten main Irish fishing ports. The findings underline the significance of the seafood sector in rural economies in Ireland where for every four jobs, a further three are generated downstream[5]. In some areas the sector actually accounts for one in every two jobs[6].

While these figures relate specifically to the Irish seafood sector, the findings are highly indicative of the significant economic contribution the seafood sector makes across Europe by providing direct employment and supporting employment downstream and in ancillary services. However, depending on the region, the size of the multipliers may vary possibly due to the fact that ancillary activities are a part of local culture in some areas and not in others.[7]

The sea and its stocks provide an ecosystem service to anglers that is both of a cultural and provisioning kind – benefits the sector seeks to continue and expand upon. Marine Recreational Fisheries (MRF) is swiftly growing to be the 2nd biggest outdoor sport with big health upsides for its participants – one of the clear growth opportunities is how angling can contribute to a healthier

[4] Bord Iascaigh Mhara 2018: A Top-Down Estimation of the Downstream Employment Generated by the Irish Seafood Sector (link).
For more information on FTE in each Member State, please consult the report by STECF: The 2020 Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet (STECF 20-06), Prellezo, R., Carvalho, N. and Guillen Garcia, J. editor(s). Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2020, EUR 28359 EN (link)
[5] Bord Iascaigh Mhara 2020: The Economic Impact of the Seafood Sector at Ireland's Main Ports (link)
[6] Bord Iascaigh Mhara 2020: The Economic Impact of the Seafood Sector: Castletownbere (link)
[7] European Commission (2016): Study on the economic importance of activities ancillary to fishing in the EU. MARE/2011/01 Lot 2, Contract Service No 11 (link)



populace even more. The upcoming transition challenge to electricity powered boating is another, that will affect the yachting/boating industry across the board.

Right now, its growth potential in Europe remains a largely untapped opportunity for the Blue Economy, growth that would go hand in hand with enhanced data collection for scientific (status of vulnerable fish stocks), management (recording and reporting of all catch) and control purposes and the typically high socio-economic value that MRF has for coastal communities.

Emerging and innovative sectors related to the Blue Economy include marine renewable energy, blue bioeconomy and biotechnology, marine minerals, desalination, maritime defence, and submarine cables. However, there are many other economic activities linked to the Blue Economy beyond the above mentioned sectors.

As the Blue Economy encompasses such a wide range of activities and impacts, effective coordination is needed to drive the proposed transformation process. The EU and its Member States share comptencies on many aspects requiring harmonistaion, for example of policies, research and innovation, as well as public and private investments.

The new approach to a sustainable Blue Economy is shaped by the Commission together with stakeholders and will also be implemented in collaboration.

The three main pillars to this new approach are:

1. Preserving marine natural capital;
2. Sharing profits and investing in innovation;
3. Providing benefits to present and future generations.

Problems which the public consultation initiative aims to tackle include:

- Climate change and biodiversity loss, with specific mention made of declining fish stocks;
- Compartmentalisation;
- Knowledge gaps;
- Rapid change, with specific mention made of new and advanced IT tools that will probably optimise fishing operations and allow for better data collection, better monitoring, and ultimately better management of marine biological resources.

The members of the Long Distance Advisory Council (LDAC), the Market Advisory Council (MAC), the Mediterranean Advisory Council (MEDAC), the North Sea Advisory Council (NSAC), the North Western Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC), and the Pelagic Advisory Council (PELAC) have come together to address challenges and opportunities related to this new approach based on their relevant expertise in catch fisheries, aquaculture, seafood processing, trading, and retailing. The Baltic Sea Advisory Council (BSAC), Black Sea Advisory Council (BlSAC), the South Western Waters Advisory Council (SWWAC) and the Outermost Regions Advisory Council (CCRUP) have not taken part in the development of this document but can support its recommendations and conclusions.

EU fisheries are following the CFP regulation that ensures "fishing […is] environmentally sustainable in the long-term and […is] managed in a way that is consistent with the objectives of achieving economic, social and employment benefits"[8]. It therefore guarantees that EU fisheries are on the path[9] to be truly sustainable from an environmental, economic, and social perspective.

Recommendations

The above mentioned ACs have structured their recommendations under the three pillars of the new approach to a sustainable Blue Economy, namely (1) preserving marine natural capital; (2) sharing profits and investing in innovation; and (3) providing benefits to present and future generations. This will allow to comprehensively address the varied activities within the seafood sector and their respective challenges and opportunities, but also ensure that these activities will remain a part of an ecosystem-based Blue Economy: an economy that respects and adapts to the ecosystem it takes place in.

1. Preserving marine natural capital

- The EU and its Member States should promote the integration and ensure the coherence of the Blue Economy framework with other relevant governance frameworks such as for international ocean governance, climate and biodiversity.

[8] Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013

[9] The Pew Charitable Trusts, ClientEarth, FishSec, Oceana, Seas at Risk, Our Fish: reply to the Commission on the state of progress in implementing the CFP through the setting of fishing opportunities (link)



- Both the European Commission and the Member States must put mechanisms in place ensuring that direct and indirect cumulative environmental effects of activities of the Blue Economy do not add to the pressure from climate change on the ocean or adversely impact one specific sector, for example fisheries, aquaculture, their value chains, and the on-shore activities. A coordinated approach and standards to include in the environmental impact assessments the relative weight of each human induced economic activity in the marine environment is desirable.
- It is vital to ensure a level playing field between all actors of the Blue Economy and implement both the same approaches – notably in respect of upholding sustainability principles – and levels of requirements, obligations, accountability and transparency across all sectors.
- Additionally , the EU has committed itself to the UN 2030 Lisbon Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). In the field of fisheries management, both the EU and fishing businesses, operators and civil society have, in particular, contributed mainly to 10 out of 17 SDGs, namely 1 (No poverty), 2 (Zero hunger), 3 (Good health), 5 (Gender equality), 8 (Good jobs and economic growth), 12 (Responsible consumption), 13 (Climate action), 14 (Life below water) - and here specifically to provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets, 16 (Peace and justice) and 17 (Partnerships for the goal).
- To ensure reducing pressure on the oceans and seas and creating the conditions for a sustainable Blue Economy, the EU should continue working at strenghtening compliance, eliminating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and at preventing overfishing. For the case of IUU fishing, the IUU Regulation could be highlighted as a good example of a legal instrument with clear objectives and an effective implementation for, notably, EU flag states and third country coastal states in terms of monitoring, control and sureveillance (MCS), but also trade[10].
- To achieve a level playing field among Blue Economy operators and ensure compliance with international standards, the EU should strengthen the application and coordination of ex-ante and ex-post assessments of Blue Economy projects and strategies including environmental, social and economic impact assessments.

[10] There are also market states involved in the IUU Regulation and the carding system is primarily a trade (ban) measure.



- Certain activities, such as deep-sea mining, oil and gas extraction or similar, are incompatible with the objectives of a sustainable Blue Economy and will need to be stopped altogether.
- In the light of climate change and its effects on seas and oceans, the European Commission and Member States should study and adopt appropriate mitigation measures in order to limit negative impacts on natural resources, economic activities and coastal communities, in particular by providing internationally coordinated and operationally integrated actions to improve knowledge and monitoring.
- In order to strenghten the actions to face climate change, adaptation measures should also be envisaged in favour of fishermen and aquaculture producers at sea, including appropriate support measures in the financial and insurance instruments. For instance, there is huge potential in supporting investments in technology that reduces CO2 emissions in the fisheries thereby reducing the CO2 footprint from the Blue Economy. Furthermore, new market strategies aimed at increasing awareness of customers regarding new species should be agreed as a coordinated international action in the framework of the Blue Economy.
- For this purpose, angling can be leveraged, as it has always been a natural way for large groups of European citizens to get acquainted with local fish species. This could now play an important role for the acceptance of emerging species, new to certain regions as a result of climate driven migration, which could be of commercial interest for professional fishing as other local species might change in distribution or decrease in abundance.

2. Sharing profits and investing in innovation

- The European Commission needs to recognise that new Blue Economy activities lead to increasing space competition and that conflicts might arise with emerging activities pushing aside traditional ones. Fishing is the pre-existing activity in coastal areas and has profoundly shaped ways of life of local communities, now threatened. In the North Sea for instance the potential spatial overlap of fishing with renewable energy expansion is extremely important[11]. This threatens the economic viability of large parts of the fishing fleet and coastal livelihoods.

[11] Stelzenmüller, V. *et al.*, 2020, Research for PECH Committee – Impact of the use of offshore wind and other marine renewables on European fisheries. European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Brussels
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/652212/IPOL_STU(2020)652212_EN.pdf

While marine fishing can only take place at sea, production of renewable energy could also be located on land. On this basis, it is recommended that a thorough analysis is carried out before deciding on locating energy infrastructures at sea.[12]

- Blue Economy considerations should not only focus on rough employment potential figures but take into account the geographical location of these jobs, the type of position offered and other leverage effect on other jobs on-shore locally and in the value chain. The small scale, large scale and distant water fisheries, together with the recreational sectors and their value chains represent a huge proportion of employment in isolated coastal regions of Europe.
- Investments in sustainable food production are needed to ensure increased resilience of the European seafood value chain and infrastructures (e.g. fleets, port activity etc.) and marine based aquaculture systems in the face of climate change impacts.
- Sustainable business practices (including public-private partnerships) across all sectors of the Blue Economy must be promoted equally and should take into account the European Commission's work on sustainable finance, taxonomy[13] and non-financial reporting.
- Both the European Commission and the Member States must put transparent conflict resolution mechanisms in place ensuring that direct and indirect cumulative socio-economic effects of activities of the Blue Economy do not adversely impact one specific sector, for example fisheries, aquaculture, recreation, their value chains, and the on-shore activities.
- Promote the role of women in the sustainable fisheries value chain, particularly in inshore communities and in the shellfish gathering sector through implementation of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on sustainable small scale fisheries. This relates to gender equity of opportunities, access to raw materials for processing and/or selling, decent working conditions, inclusiveness, visibility and representation in decision making structures and processes.
- Promote active policies from the Blue Economy aimed to recruit and attract young people to the fishing sector. It is vital to guarantee that new generations continue with the activity and

[12] This is an important dimension to bear in mind when considering the EU Commission's communication: "An EU Strategy to harness the potential of offshore renewable energy for a climate neutral future" Ref {SWD(2020) 273 final}

[13] EU taxonomy for sustainable activities (link)

facilitate unemployed young people and young entrepreneurs the access to an activity niche in the maritime and fishing sector.

- To create the conditions for a sustainable Blue Economy, the EU should ensure a level-playing field based on decent work and social sustainability in Blue Economy sectors and address justice and equity concerns related to Blue Economy development building on inclusive processes (associating in particular local coastal communities).

3. Providing benefits to present and future generations

- Benefits should not only be understood as economic ones, but also in terms of maximising contribution to food security and ensuring sustainable and healthy seafood for human consumption.
- Focus is needed on the just transition for fishers (both professional /commercial and recreational) to secure the sustainable socio-economic development and resilience of coastal communities now and into the future.
- Access to finance is crucial to support fisher(wo)men's transition towards more sustainable fishing practices. The EU taxonomy could be an example on how to direct EU recovery funds in the fishery sector, with specific attention given to fisherwomen's access to these funds.
- To ensure the continuity of fishing as the first Blue Economy activity, the Commission needs to work on increasing the attractiveness of the sector for young fishers. We would encourage the Commission to improve the choice of opportunities for young people in our Member States and specifically our coastal communities through developing skills that would be inter-usable between the marine sectors to help sustain our coastal communities' future generations.
- The EU Blue Economy strategy will be a key instrument in achieving the EU's objectives outlined in the European Commission's Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system, and vice-versa, as the two strategies are intertwined. In our market economy, consumer demand for local and sustainably produced seafood is instrumental to drive effective change in production practices. Verifiable, traceable, transparent and credible labelling is an essential tool to inform and incentivise consumers and to induce change down the supply chains. The contribution of independent certification programmes in the development of this tool should be also taken into account.



Conclusions

The seafood sector has continually worked on improving its sustainability performance with a multitude of initiatives and improvements implemented over the years, including improved fisheries management at sea, more efficient and effective aquaculture practices, as well as increased resource efficiency in seafood processing. The sector is highly regulated, and its members persistently strive to address the balance between the three pillars of sustainability through individual, national or trans-national initiatives.

Though seafood has a lower carbon footprint on average compared to land-based animal protein production[14], and the sector has been steadily decreasing its CO2 emissions for at least the past 10 years[15], the sector recognises the importance of continual improvement regarding its environmental performance - in order to fully transition to more sustainable and low impact seafood systems - and is committed to ensuring the long-term sustainable performance of the sector. This will also allow to safeguard its contribution to a healthy marine environment, nutritious food production, and resilient coastal communities, which is also true for the recreational sector.

When looking at EU seafood imports, several cases of human rights violations can be highlighted, including the violations of labour rights by some industrial fishing fleets that supply fish for the EU market, or the imports of fishmeal and fish oil from West Africa that threaten the right to food of African populations. As the EU market is the most important and lucrative market for fish products globally, a future legislation that would ensure products placed on the EU market are free from human rights violations in their supply chains, as suggested by the Farm to Fork Strategy, would be an opportunity to address these concerns in the EU, but also to lead the way in global fisheries. At the same time, it is important that the environmental sustainability of imported products is ensured in the interest of EU consumers and to guarantee a level-playing field for the EU seafood sector[16], in accordance with the current EU control, import and trade measures in force.

- END -

[14] Clune, Stephen, Enda Crossin, and Karli Verghese. 2017. 'Systematic Review of Greenhouse Gas Emissions for Different Fresh Food Categories'. Journal of Cleaner Production 140 (January): 766–83. (link)

[15] 17% fuel consumption decrease from 2009 to 2017 (and continued reduction of fleet size since 1996 at least). European Commission. Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries. (2020). Facts and figures on the common fisheries policy: basic statistical data: 2020 edition. Publications Office. https://doi.org/10.2771/553870

[16] For more information on the MAC's view on the topic of level-playing field, please consult this advice: link

ANNEX – AC advice related to aspects of the Blue Economy

Long Distance AC

2020

- LDAC Reply to EC Targeted Consultation on IOG – October (link)
- LDAC advice on addressing role of women in fisheries – example of EU SFPAs (link)

2019

- LDAC Opinion on Deepsea Mining (link)
- LDAC letter on implementation of SMEFF Regulation (link)

2018

- LDAC Recommendations on Strengthening the EU role in International Fisheries Governance - December (link)

Market AC

2020

- MAC Advice on Level Playing field (link)
- MAC Letter on Public Online Consultation on Horizon Europe Co-Design 2021-2024 (link)
- MAC Advice on Consumer Information on Fishery and Aquaculture Products (link)
- MAC Advice on Better Alignment of Import Control Schemes in Major Market States (link)

2018

- MAC Opinion on EU Fisheries Control System (link)



Mediterranean AC

2020

- MEDAC opinion on invasive species and algae (link)
- MEDAC letter on GFCM Strategy 2021-2025-Integration of the previous MEDAC contribution (link)
- MEDAC Opinion "Towards more sustainable fishing in the EU: state of play and orientations for 2021" (link)
- Multi-AC Advice on the implementation of Single Use Plastics Directive and operational aspect of the Fishing for Litter Scheme.

North Sea AC

- NWWAC, PELAC and NSAC advice for a non-recurrent request to ICES on the impact of marine wind energy developments on commercial fish stocks (link)
- NSAC Advice to Commission on Circular Design of Fishing Gear and endorsement of the NWWAC Multi-AC Advice on the implementation of the Single Use Plastics Directive and operational aspects of the Fishing for Litter Scheme (link)
- NSAC Advice on Port Reception Facilities (link)
- NSAC Advice on NSAC engagement with TenneT proposal for a North Sea Wind Power Hub (link)

North Western Waters AC

2020

- NWWAC, PELAC and NSAC advice for a non-recurrent request to ICES on the impact of marine wind energy developments on commercial fish stocks (link)
- NWWAC electronic response to the Open Public Consultation on the European Climate Pact, within the European Green Deal
- NWWAC electronic response to the public consultation for the EU climate ambition for 2030 and for the design of certain climate and energy policies of the European Green Deal
- NWWAC electronic response to the Open Public Consultation: New EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change



- Joint NWWAC/PELAC advice for a non-recurrent request to ICES on the potential impacts of seismic activities (link)
- Multi-AC Advice on the implementation of the Single Use Plastics Directive and operational aspects of the Fishing for Litter Scheme (link)

2019

- NWWAC Request for setup ICES working group to investigate impacts of seismic activities on fish stocks in the North Western Waters (link)

Pelagic AC

2020

- Pelagic AC recommendation on deep-sea mining activities (link)
- NWWAC & PELAC advice for non-recurrent request to ICES on seismic impacts (link)
- NWWAC, PELAC and NSAC advice for a non-recurrent request to ICES on the impact of marine wind energy developments on commercial fish stocks (link)

2019

- Request for setup ICES working group to investigate impacts of seismic activities on (herring) spawning grounds (link)
- Setting-up of an ICES working group to investigate impacts of seismic activities on (herring) spawning grounds (link)