

Common Fisheries Policy Evaluation

EBCD's position

As part of its ongoing evaluation of the **Common Fisheries Policy** the **European Commission** launched a **public consultation** held between January and April 2025. In response to this important process and alongside its reply to the questionnaire, EBCD submitted a **comprehensive position paper** outlining its vision and recommendations for shaping a future-proof CFP that delivers on sustainability, resilience, and innovation.



As we face increasing challenges such as climate change and the evolving geopolitical landscape, the European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD) believes that an **up-to-date Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is essential** for achieving sustainable fisheries governance and management that benefits both the environment and society.

While the **implementation of the existing framework** remains crucial, it is evident that **new measures** are needed to make the policy fit for purpose in the face of evolving environmental, economic, and social pressures.



This requires a new philosophy driven by **modernisation** bringing the fisheries and aquaculture sectors on board, fostering **innovation**, and ensuring that both **environmental conservation and economic prosperity** can coexist. The future of the CFP should be built around a framework that integrates environmental sustainability with socio-economic resilience, ensuring that the policy helps both sectors thrive in a rapidly changing world

The CFP should not be seen as a set of opposing forces but rather as a dynamic system where both **environmental and socio-economic goals** are mutually reinforcing. A robust, adaptive, and inclusive CFP will help secure healthy oceans, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, and a resilient food system, benefiting both current and future generations.

Here are our **key recommendations** to ensure that the CFP is fit for future challenges while promoting sustainability in both the fisheries and aquaculture sectors:

Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM) approach & adaptive management based on scientific advice - The first step toward modernising the CFP is to ensure an ecosystem-based management (EBM) approach. This approach would take into account the dominant cumulative pressures on marine environments, including land-based activities, species interactions, climate change and socio-economic aspects. By considering these factors in policy design, the CFP can ensure that it conserve and restore marine life while acknowledging all ecosystems services that the oceans provide. The CFP must become more adaptive, evolving with the latest scientific knowledge. This requires a case-by-case approach to decision-making, where policies are tailored to specific regional or local challenges. By embedding adaptive management into the CFP, we can ensure that decisions are consistently informed by the best available science, keeping marine ecosystems resilient in the face of emerging threats while considering human needs.

Treating the three pillars of sustainability equally - It is critical that the CFP embraces the three pillars of sustainability - environmental, social, and economic- equally. In the context of fisheries and aquaculture, this means considering the needs of local communities, the long-term viability of marine resources, and the economic realities of the industry. By ensuring that all stakeholders are heard and involved in the decision-making process, the CFP can strike a balance that supports healthy oceans while fostering prosperous livelihoods for the people who depend on them. Treating sustainability as a holistic concept, rather than prioritising one pillar over another, will ensure the CFP's success in the long run.

Ensuring Food Security - Aquatic products are crucial for ensuring food security, providing essential, low-carbon footprint proteins that are vital for a healthy diet. The CFP must acknowledge the importance of fisheries and aquaculture not only in securing sustainable food sources but also in contributing to reaching climate commitment and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By emphasising food security in the CFP, the policy can support the sustainable management of marine resources, promote healthier diets, and reduce environmental impacts. This approach would ensure that fisheries and aquaculture are part of a sustainable, resilient global food system, contributing to long-term food security while addressing challenges like climate change, population growth, and the need for more sustainable food sources.

Stakeholder engagement and regionalisation - The future of the CFP lies in enhanced stakeholder engagement and regionalisation. Local knowledge and expertise are vital for developing policies that are both effective and context-specific. Regionalisation allows for policies that are better suited to the unique challenges faced by different regions, whether related to fish stocks, marine ecosystems, or socio-economic conditions. Empowering local and regional actors - such as fishers, aquaculture producer, environmental groups, and local governments - ensures that the CFP is not only top-down but also responsive to on-the-ground realities. Greater stakeholder involvement will foster ownership and collaboration, making policies more effective and widely supported. In that perspective, EBCD has strongly supported the Advisory Councils since their creation. Indeed, they contribute to shaping inclusive decision making based on cooperation and compromises. Their role will be essential in a future CFP and appropriate human and financial resources should be allocated to allow them to carry on this important role.

A Common Aquaculture Policy - Despite the strategic guidelines set by the EU, the lack of a coherent, common policy for aquaculture has led to a fragmented approach to the sector. This fragmentation prevents the sector from reaching its full potential and places it at a disadvantage compared to other regions of the world, particularly in Asia, where aquaculture has seen significant growth and development. The EU's current fragmented approach hinders innovation, efficiency, and the sustainability of aquaculture, making it difficult to optimise production, scale up operations, and improve environmental and economic performance. A unified, comprehensive aquaculture policy is essential to reduce dependency on imports, enhance local production, and ensure that the sector can realise its full potential. This would not only contribute to food security but also strengthen the EU's resilience, making it less reliant on external markets while aligning with the EU's broader environmental, climate, and sustainability goals.

Fit for Innovation and Decarbonisation - As part of EU's broader sustainability goals, the CFP should play a key role in supporting innovation within the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. The policy must incentivise the adoption of new technologies that reduce the sector's carbon footprint, promote sustainable practices, and enhance the efficiency of operations. Enabling innovation and decarbonisation, should be part the CFP's framework, offering support for clean technologies and practices that allow the industry to thrive while contributing to Europe's climate targets.

Strong International Governance - To effectively address issues such as illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and the management of shared marine resources, the CFP must contribute to and strengthen international governance frameworks. Given that marine ecosystems do not adhere to national borders, strong coordination across countries is necessary to ensure sustainable fisheries management. The international dimension of the CFP must be strengthened to ensure that efforts towards sustainability are common efforts. This would foster a level playing field for the EU fisheries and aquaculture sectors that are implementing high standards. The EU plays a crucial role in Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) by promoting fair and sustainable fishing practices, ensuring a level playing field for all members. To strengthen this role, additional funding and human resources should be allocated to ensure appropriate EU representation in these fora. This would enable the EU to more effectively promote equitable management of fish stocks, prevent overfishing, and ensure that all countries adhere to the same environmental and regulatory standards in decision-making processes.

Ensuring coherence with other policies and initiatives - For the CFP to be truly effective, it must align with other EU policies/initiatives and international frameworks. Achieving this coherence is essential to ensure that the EU's marine and environmental ambitions are met while maintaining resilient, modern, and competitive fisheries and aquaculture sectors. The CFP must be aligned with EU's broader environmental, climate, and trade policies, along with international commitments such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to avoid policy fragmentation. This is especially important in light of new initiatives like the Competitiveness Compass and the Clean Industrial Deal. By aligning the CFP with these wider frameworks, the EU can establish a unified approach to ocean governance that promotes long-term sustainability, competitiveness and innovation.