

SUMMARY REPORT

EBCD/EESC event: The Contribution of Fisheries and Aquaculture to Food Security - Stocktake +1

29 January 2026

On **Thursday 29 January**, the European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD), in partnership with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and with the support of the Xunta de Galicia, organised the **Stocktake+1 Conference on the Contribution of Fisheries and Aquaculture to Food Security**.

The event built on the first edition held in November 2024, which brought together policymakers, scientists, industry representatives, and civil society to highlight the strategic role of Europe's blue food sectors in sustainable and resilient food systems. The Stocktake+1 Conference provided an opportunity to **review progress achieved over the past year** at both EU and international levels and to identify priorities for further action.

As global challenges intensify - geopolitical tensions, climate change and rising energy costs - ensuring Europe's capacity to deliver **affordable and sustainable food** has become a key policy priority. In this context, fisheries and aquaculture products, often referred to as **"Blue Foods"**, offer a unique contribution thanks to their high nutritional value, low environmental footprint and strong socio-economic importance across Europe's coastal and rural regions.

Discussions focused on recent international developments, including the UN Ocean Conference, the UN Food Systems Summit Stocktake +4 and the UN Climate COP30, where aquatic foods have gained increasing recognition. At EU level, attention centred on ongoing and upcoming initiatives, such as the evaluation of the **Common Fisheries Policy**, the implementation of the **Ocean Pact**, the future **Ocean Act** and the **Vision for Fisheries and Aquaculture 2040**. Participants underlined the need to translate political recognition into concrete, coherent policy action.

Find the full report [here](#).



SUMMARY OF THE OUTCOMES

Blue foods as a Strategic Pillar of European Food Security

There was broad consensus that fisheries and aquaculture are not niche sectors but **strategic pillars of Europe's food security, resilience, and competitiveness**. Blue foods provide high-quality protein, essential micronutrients, and relatively low-carbon animal products while sustaining coastal and rural economies. **Strengthening sustainable EU production capacity** was widely seen as central to strategic autonomy and long-term resilience, in a context where the gap is widening between rising imports and declining domestic production and consumption.

Key messages:

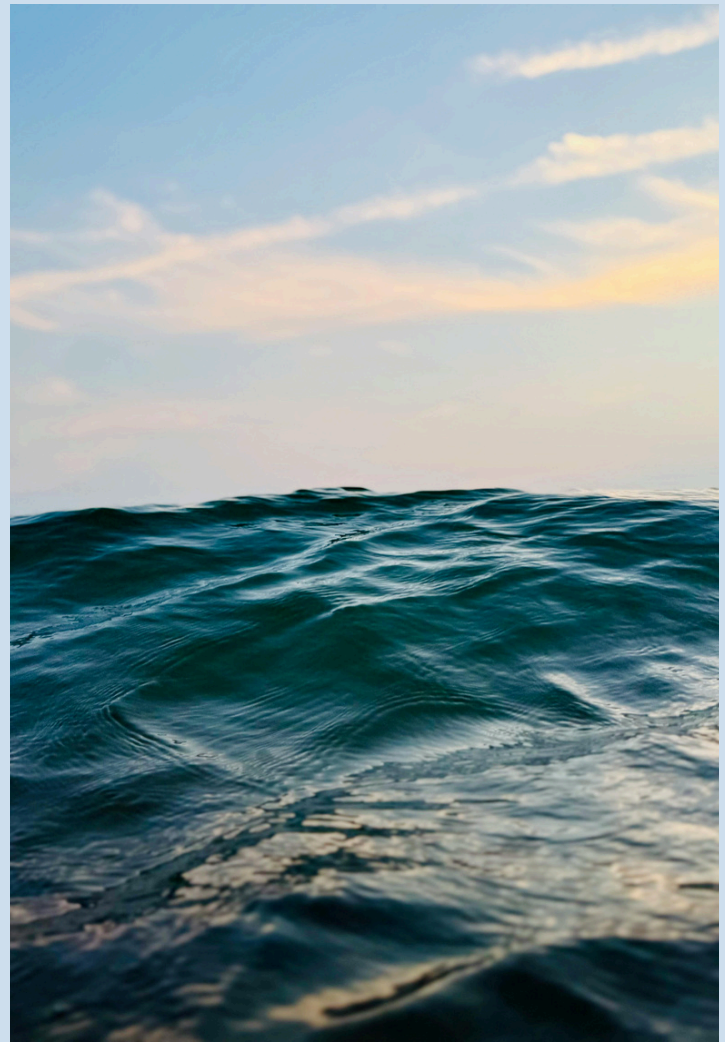
- Recognise blue foods as core to Europe's food sovereignty and resilience agenda.
- Reverse declining EU production through supportive, predictable policy frameworks.
- Align food security, public health, climate, and competitiveness objectives.

Sustainability and Production as Mutually Reinforcing Goals

Participants agreed that environmental protection and food production must not be framed as competing priorities. Healthy marine and freshwater ecosystems are preconditions for long-term food security, economic stability and climate resilience. Sustainability frameworks must be science-based, enforceable and proportionate to support EU food sovereignty, while providing operators with the predictability needed to plan, invest and innovate.

Key messages:

- Apply ecosystem-based management supported by scientific advice.
- Ensure sustainability measures reinforce, rather than undermine, viable domestic production.
- Provide long-term policy stability.



Policy Coherence, Enforcement and Fair Competition

A recurring theme was that the key barrier to blue foods supporting food security lies not in legislation itself, **but in gaps in implementation, enforcement and policy coherence**. Blue foods also remain marginalised in food and climate debates - globally, they receive few financial support for their development, and at the EU scale, they remain **underrepresented in sustainable food system policies**.

Key messages:

- Fully implement and enforce existing policies
- Improve coordination across EU institutions and integrate blue foods into debates.
- Ensure sustainable sourcing and traceability by enforcing equivalent standards for imported products.



A Blue Food Action Plan within the Vision 2040

Stakeholders called for the integration of a dedicated **Blue Food Action Plan** into the forthcoming Vision for Fisheries and Aquaculture 2040. A coherent action plan should address regulatory complexity, innovation uptake, access to finance, skills development, and generational renewal.

Key messages:

- Recognise blue food production as a solution for EU food autonomy and sovereignty and with conservation goals.
- Promote blue food consumption by improving public understanding of its benefits, and its diversity.
- Streamline administrative and licensing procedures, particularly in aquaculture.
- Invest in innovation, skills, SMEs, and generational renewal.



Decarbonisation and Energy Transition of the Sector

There was recognition that the fisheries sector has already reduced greenhouse gas emissions significantly and produces **comparatively low-carbon animal protein**. Further decarbonisation is achievable and represents a strategic opportunity to align climate ambition with food security goals. However, regulatory bottlenecks, aging fleets, and insufficient investment risk slowing progress.

Key messages:

- Support fleet modernisation and energy transition through predictable regulation and funding.
- Align the Multiannual Financial Framework with decarbonisation objectives.
- Treat low-carbon blue foods as part of Europe's climate solution.

Inclusive Blue Food Systems and Generational Renewal

The conference highlighted the essential role of youth, women and coastal communities in shaping the future of fisheries and aquaculture. **Inclusivity** was framed not as consultation alone but as meaningful participation and **shared decision-making**. Workforce aging and skills gaps were identified as structural risks to sector resilience.

Key messages:

- Move from consultation to co-decision and shared governance.
- Empower youth and women through structured engagement platforms.
- Support training, modern working conditions, and generational renewal.

Global Responsibility and Internal Resilience

There was agreement that strengthening EU production must go hand-in-hand with responsible global engagement. The EU plays a major role in global seafood trade and governance, and its credibility depends on **promoting sustainability standards internationally** while avoiding the displacement of environmental and social pressures to third countries.

Key messages:

- Promote responsible international fisheries partnerships and global standards.
- Prevent illegal and unsustainable products from entering the EU market.
- Balance openness to trade with enhanced internal production resilience.



SUMMARY OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESSED DURING THE CONFERENCE

1 Integrate Blue Foods into Strategic EU Frameworks

Blue foods must be embedded at the heart of Europe's food security, climate, and competitiveness agenda. Integrating a dedicated **Blue Food Action Plan** into the **Vision for Fisheries and Aquaculture 2040**, and aligning it with the Ocean Pact, the Clean Industrial Deal, the CFP evaluation, and the Multiannual Financial Framework, would ensure coherent delivery. Political recognition must translate into **concrete instruments** that strengthen sustainable production while integrating blue foods as part of the solution for resilience and climate objectives.

2 Reverse Declining EU Production and Consumption

Europe's growing reliance on seafood imports exposes structural vulnerabilities. **Facilitating sustainable domestic production**—through simplified licensing, reduced administrative burdens, fleet modernisation, and better use of available quotas—will help restore balance between production and consumption. **Improving public awareness on the health benefits** of eating seafood is also essential.

3 Ensure Fair Competition and Equivalent Standards for Imports

A **level playing field** is critical for the credibility and competitiveness of EU producers. Enforcing equivalent environmental, social, and safety standards for imported seafood, **strengthening traceability systems** reduces unfair competition. Transparent and consistent labelling requirements further empowers consumers and reinforce market accountability.

Strengthen Policy Coherence and Effective Governance

4 Strong legislative frameworks already exist, but implementation gaps undermine impact. **Improving coordination across EU institutions and policy areas**—particularly fisheries, trade, environment, and health—will enhance coherence. Structured stakeholder dialogue mechanisms and rigorous enforcement ensure that commitments under the Common Fisheries Policy and related legislation translate into measurable outcomes.

Accelerate Decarbonisation and Energy Transition

5 The fisheries and aquaculture sectors can contribute significantly to climate objectives while supplying low-carbon protein. Providing **predictable financial support, enabling fleet renewal, and removing regulatory bottlenecks** will facilitate energy transition. Aligning funding instruments with climate adaptation and innovation priorities will ensure that decarbonisation strengthens both environmental performance and sector competitiveness.

Promote Research, Innovation, and Knowledge Uptake

6 Sustainable growth depends on translating scientific advances into practice. Expanding research on fish health, climate adaptation and fisheries management will reinforce resilience. **Strengthening mechanisms that scale innovation**—particularly for SMEs—and **improving nutrition data and food composition analysis** will better integrate blue foods into public health and sustainability policies.

Advance Social Sustainability and Generational Renewal

7 The long-term viability of fisheries and aquaculture depends on people. Supporting youth engagement platforms, promoting women's leadership, and investing in training and modern working conditions will foster generational renewal. Moving from consultation toward **meaningful participation** and **shared decision-making** will ensure inclusive and resilient blue food systems.

Balance Global Responsibility with Internal Resilience

8 The EU's global seafood footprint requires responsible trade and governance practices. Strengthen the governance of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements, **ensure sustainable sourcing and imports traceability, and promoting high standards internationally** protects ecosystems and communities. Balancing openness to trade with enhanced domestic resilience will reinforce both sustainability and strategic autonomy.