EUROPEAN BUREAU FOR CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT

Date Release : 20 October 2026

# BRIEFING

## EU VISION 2040 FOR FISHERIES & AQUACULTURE

### 1. CONTEXT AND OVERARCHING OBJECTIVE

The European Commission published its **Vision 2040 for Fisheries and Aquaculture** on 20 October 2026, as part of the European Ocean Pact and the Mission letter of Commissioner Kadis. It follows the evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), which identified progress in reducing fishing pressure but also persistent challenges concerning stock recovery, profitability, investment and generational renewal.
It should be noted that this **Communication and its annexes are not legally binding**. However, some of the announced measures will require legislative proposals from the European Commission which, if adopted by the co-legislators (the European Parliament and the Council) under the ordinary legislative procedure, will become legally binding.
The sectors face growing pressures from climate change, biodiversity loss, ageing fleets and workforces, energy costs, competition for maritime space and geopolitical uncertainty. Aquaculture production has also stagnated, while the EU remains highly dependent on imports to meet its aquatic food demand.

**Overarching objective:** By 2040, EU fisheries and aquaculture should be competitive, resilient and environmentally sustainable, supported by healthy aquatic ecosystems, viable business models, modern infrastructure and an attractive workforce. They should contribute to EU food security, climate objectives and the prosperity of coastal communities.

The Vision is structured around **three interconnected dimensions: aquatic food supply, consumption and enabling conditions.** It is accompanied by an **EU Strategy for Fisheries External Action** and an **Energy Transition Roadmap** (**Annex I & II**). These are accompanied by three Staff Working Documents covering: (1) **EU Fisheries External Action: Achievements and Challenges**; (2) **the Roadmap for the Energy Transition in EU Fisheries;** and (3) **the Roadmap for the Energy Transition in EU Aquaculture**.

## 2. AQUATIC FOOD SUPPLY: STRENGTHENING SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION AND COMPETITIVENESS

### 2.1. EU fishing fleet – A modern, profitable and sustainable fleet

**Objective:** By 2040, the EU fishing fleet should operate in balance with available fishing opportunities, with modern, energy-efficient vessels, lower environmental impacts, improved profitability and attractive working conditions.

**Main measures:**

- Continue **ecosystem-based fisheries management, stock rebuilding and efforts against illegal fishing,** while exploring multiannual total allowable catches (TACs) and greater consideration of socio-economic factors.
- **Improve fleet-capacity management and assess, from 2027, complementary indicators** of effective harvesting capacity, considering technological developments, safety and energy transition needs.
- **Encourage fair and transparent allocation of fishing opportunities** under Article 17 of the CFP, particularly for small-scale fishers and young entrants, including the reallocation of unused quotas.
- **Support producer organisations,** selective fishing practices, fleet-tailored transition strategies, investment, innovation and diversification of income.

### 2.2. EU aquaculture – Expanding sustainable EU production

**Objective:** Establish aquaculture as a strategic pillar of the EU food system, increasing sustainable production, reducing import dependence and ensuring economic viability and high environmental standards.

**Main measures:**

- **Present a proposal by the end of 2027 to simplify and improve the regulatory and administrative framework,** particularly licensing procedures, without lowering environmental standards.
- Establish an **EU Initiative on Sustainable Aquaculture in 2027** to strengthen coordination between stakeholders.
- **Integrate aquaculture into maritime spatial planning and climate adaptation strategies,** promoting synergies with fisheries, agriculture, renewable energy and nature restoration.
- **Support nature-positive aquaculture, alternative feed ingredients,** hatchery capacity, producer organisations and improved aquatic animal welfare standards.

## 2. AQUATIC FOOD SUPPLY: STRENGTHENING SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION AND COMPETITIVENESS

**2.3. Energy transition – Reducing fossil fuel dependence**
**Objective**: Strengthen the competitiveness and resilience of fisheries and aquaculture while reducing greenhouse gas emissions through a realistic, affordable and socially just energy transition.

**Main measures:**

- **Implement the accompanying Energy Transition Roadmap** (Annex II) through two phases: initially prioritising energy efficiency, research and innovation, followed by wider deployment of sustainable fuels and clean technologies.
- **Support fleet modernisation, including retrofitting and cleaner propulsion systems**, while maintaining fishing capacity in balance with available opportunities.
- **Mobilise public and private investment in alternative fuels,** port infrastructure, industrial capacity and workforce skills, in coordination with wider EU maritime decarbonisation initiatives

## 3. AQUATIC FOOD CONSUMPTION: DIVERSIFICATION AND ADDED VALUE

**Objective: Ensure access to diverse, affordable and sustainable aquatic food, while strengthening consumer information, reducing supply dependencies and increasing the value of EU production.**

**Main measures:**

- **Apply digital traceability** throughout the supply chain, including processed products and imports, by 2029.
- **Consider extending mandatory consumer information** to prepared and preserved fishery and aquaculture products.
- Launch a **communication campaign in 2027 promoting EU-produced and sustainable aquatic food**.
- Encourage **consumption of a wider range of species, i**ncluding underused stocks, suitable invasive species and low-trophic aquaculture products.

## 4. ENABLING CONDITIONS: CREATING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR LONG-TERM RESILIENCE

**4.1. Workforce – Attracting new generations and improving working conditions**
**Objective:** Ensure an adequately skilled workforce through better working conditions, stable incomes, equal opportunities and generational renewal.

Main measures:

- Launch a **Blue Generational Renewal Strategy in 2027,** addressing skills, training, mentoring and access to first vessels or aquaculture businesses.
- Propose the **integration of the STCW-F Convention into EU law** by spring 2028 to strengthen training and certification standards.
- Promote implementation of EU labour and safety rules, gender equality, workforce diversification and new income opportunities, including pescatourism and local value chains.

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### 4.2. Access to finance – Mobilising investment for modernisation

**Objective:** Develop viable business models capable of attracting investment in fleet renewal, aquaculture, innovation and the energy transition.

**Main measures:**

- **Prioritise public funding for investment gaps and market failures,** using guarantees, de-risking mechanisms and other financial instruments to mobilise private capital.
- **Strengthen cooperation with financial institutions, i**ncluding the European Investment Bank, and provide technical assistance.
- Explore, through a study by the end of 2027, whether fishing rights could facilitate access to finance.
- **Use opportunities under the proposed 2028–2034 EU budget,** including the proposed minimum €2 billion allocation for core CFP functions under National and Regional Partnership Plans, subject to negotiations.

### 4.3. Governance and control – Effective, simplified and enforceable rules

**Objective**: Achieve fully documented fisheries and aquaculture activities, effective enforcement and a simpler, more predictable regulatory framework.

**Main measures**:

- **Improve implementation of existing legislation** and consider targeted initiatives addressing the landing obligation (taking into account the potential of technological developments and fully documented fisheries), unwanted catches, fleet investment needs, small-scale fisheries and aquaculture.
- **Consider simplification of the EMFAF** Regulation and EU multiannual plans.
- **Promote advanced monitoring technologies,** digital reporting, data processing and risk-based controls.
- **Strengthen enforcement against IUU fishing** and hold twice-yearly implementation dialogues with stakeholders, particularly Advisory Councils.

### 4.4. Access to maritime space – Fair and ecosystem-based spatial planning

**Objective:** Ensure predictable and equitable access to maritime space, recognising aquatic food production as a strategic priority alongside environmental protection and other maritime activities.

**Main measures:**

- **Promote ecosystem-based maritime spatial planning,** stakeholder participation and multiuse approaches to minimise conflicts between sectors.
- **Integrate marine protected areas,** restoration objectives and climate adaptation into spatial planning.
- Propose an **Ocean Act in early 2027**, building on the revision of the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive and aligned with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive revision.

## 4. ENABLING CONDITIONS: CREATING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR LONG-TERM RESILIENCE

**4.5. Research and innovation – Accelerating the uptake of sustainable technologies**
**Objective:** Make innovation accessible and affordable, improve scientific advice and accelerate the application of research to fisheries and aquaculture.

**Main measures:**

- **Strengthen EU scientific cooperation and participation** in international fisheries management.
- Adopt an **EU Ocean and Water Research and Innovation Strategy** in early 2027.
- Support **technology uptake, ocean observation through OceanEye,** improved recreational fisheries data through RecFishing and greater integration of socio-economic evidence into scientific advice.

## 5. EXTERNAL ACTION: PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES GLOBALLY

**Objective**: Strengthen international fisheries governance, ensure sustainable access to aquatic resources and supply chains, combat IUU fishing and promote fair competition and decent working conditions worldwide.
**Main measures**:

- Strengthen multilateral cooperation, science-based management and the effectiveness of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs).
- Address **global overcapacity, IUU fishing, unfair competition and improve transparency of vessels and ownership.**
- Promote labour standards and social responsibility in international fisheries frameworks.
- Strengthen regional cooperation and develop a new generation of **Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs).**
- Promote sustainable seafood supply chains through trade policy, including work towards **sustainability requirements under the Autonomous Tariff Quota** regime.
- Improve the transparency, cost-efficiency and sustainability of rules governing the **EU external fleet.**