

EU ACTION PLAN FOR BLUE FOODS

“Aquatic foods provide unique micronutrients that can help secure healthy diets. It’s about time we harnessed aquatic foods to their full capacity to deliver ecological, economic and nutrition benefits around the world”, M. Barange, FAO

The EU aquatic food sector is at a crossroads. In the coming years, Europe will face crucial decisions that will shape the future of its food system and now is the moment to ensure that aquatic food continues to be a cornerstone of our society and economy. A shift to a healthier, more sustainable, affordable, and balanced diet is essential for a successful transition to a more sustainable food system - and blue food is part of the solution.

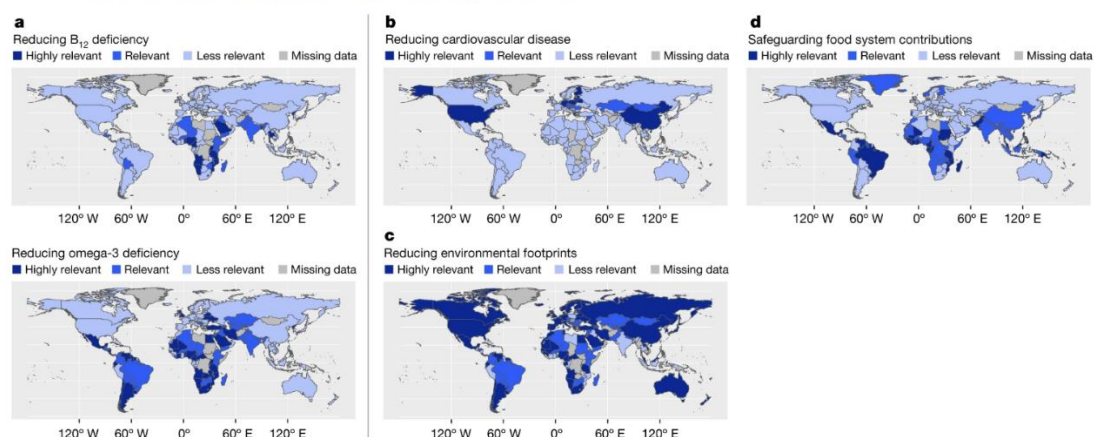
Building on this need, we urge Commissioners Hansen and Kadis to develop an **EU Action Plan for Blue Foods by 2026**, to strengthen aquatic food systems—from responsible production to sustainable consumption.

This plan should be a key element of the **Vision for the Future of Agriculture and Food**, the **EU Oceans’ Pact** and part of the commitments to be made by the EU at the **3rd United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3)** in Nice from June 9 to 13, 2025.

Given its health benefits, prospects for substantial expansion, and potential for a relatively small environmental footprint, the *EAT-Lancet* report suggests seafood to be a particularly promising and accessible source of protein and nutrients in the future. In fact, fish together with fruits and vegetables are recognized as *emphasized foods*, meaning their consumption should be encouraged when promoting diets that are good for people and for the planet.

Fig. 1: National relevance of blue food in supporting four policy objectives.

From: [Four ways blue foods can help achieve food system ambitions across nations](#)



Policy objective relevance is based on how well each nation matched the conditions for when blue foods could be expected to contribute to achieving food system ambitions (see Supplementary Table 2 for formalized inclusion criteria). **a–d**, The national relevance of the policies relating to reducing blue-food-sensitive deficiencies (vitamin B₁₂ (top) and omega-3 (bottom); **a**), reducing the burden of cardiovascular disease (**b**), reducing environmental footprints of food consumption and production (**c**) and safeguarding blue food contributions under climate change (**d**). Readers can examine the detailed objectives matching individual countries, and explore effects of different cutoffs at https://gedb.shinyapps.io/BFA_synthesis/.

Blue Foods Facts & Figures

Increasing global demand

Global demand for blue foods is set to double by 2050, indicating the growing role of blue foods in meeting future food security needs. Rapidly growing economies with large populations are driving the increasing demand for seafood. This might shift global trade trends and competition for access to blue foods and their availability in the EU. However, in this context, Europe is one of the only continents to experience a decline in aquatic production, according to the FAO.

Lower environmental footprint

Blue foods generally have a lower environmental footprint compared to land-based animal proteins, with most contributing to lower greenhouse gas emissions and biodiversity impacts.

Diversity of species

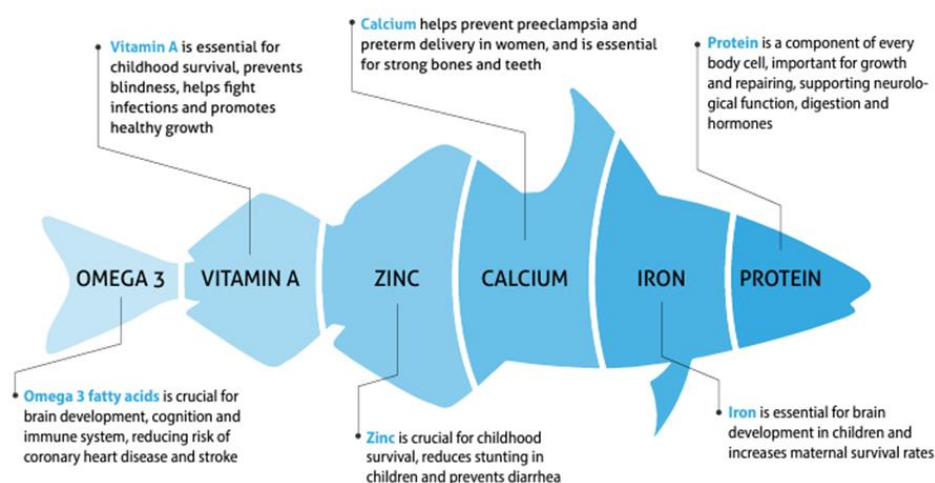
Over 2,500 species or species groups of fish, invertebrates, and aquatic plants are either wild-caught or cultivated for food, reflecting the diversity of blue foods available.

Livelihood dependency

Globally, more than 800 million people rely on blue food systems for their livelihoods.

Nutritional benefits

All seafood contains important protein and, depending on the species, various amounts of fats and micronutrients. Worldwide, over 3 billion people rely on blue foods for 20% of their animal protein, along with essential nutrients like Vitamin A, B-12, calcium, iodine, iron, zinc, and omega-3 fatty acids, contributing to healthier diets.



Why an EU Action Plan for Blue Food?

Existing policies do not ensure that healthy, sustainable, and balanced diets, including diverse and responsibly sourced aquatic foods are the easy or affordable choice for European consumers. New policies are critically needed to increase the sustainable production and consumption of blue food. More efforts are needed to communicate and strengthen sustainable and efficient aquatic food systems across production, processing and consumption stages.

An **EU Action Plan for Blue Food** will:

- deliver on EU climate and environmental targets,
- improve food security and strategic autonomy,
- enhance health and well-being through better nutrition,
- drive economic growth and innovation in the seafood sector,
- strengthen coherence between existing EU policies.

Key Benefits of an EU Action Plan for Blue Foods

1. Strengthening EU food security & strategic autonomy

- The EU currently imports over 70% of its seafood consumption, making it vulnerable to market fluctuations, price volatility, and geopolitical risks.
- Investing in sustainable aquaculture and responsible fisheries will enhance the EU's self-sufficiency and reduce dependency on imports.
- The EU should establish stronger support mechanisms for domestic seafood production, ensuring steady business for fishers, aquaculture farmers, and seafood processors.

2. Improving health through nutrient-rich diets

- Many Europeans consume insufficient omega-3 fatty acids and high-quality marine proteins, increasing the risk of cardiovascular diseases, obesity, and malnutrition.
- Promoting sustainable Blue Food consumption can prevent diet-related diseases, lower healthcare costs, and improve overall public health.
- Scientific studies confirm that fish consumption is linked to reduced risks of heart failure, cerebrovascular disease, ischemic stroke, and metabolic disorders.
- Diets across the EU are not aligned with health guidelines. A concern exists that the emphasis on environmentally friendly diets may cause the public to overlook the essential need for nutritional adequacy. Therefore, a balanced approach is needed, combining environmental responsibility with sound nutritional science.

3. Protecting the climate and marine ecosystems

Blue Foods have a lower environmental footprint compared to land-based animal proteins.

- Expanding sustainable Blue Food systems will:
 - lower the carbon footprint of food production,
 - reduce pressure on land-based agriculture,
 - tackle food loss and waste
 - enhance ocean and aquatic ecosystem health.
- Stronger measures against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing should be implemented to protect biodiversity and ensure fair competition.

4. Educating Consumers Through a Dedicated Awareness Campaign on health & sustainability

Many consumers are unaware of the nutritional and environmental benefits of seafood, while misinformation discourages sustainable choices.

A well-structured EU-wide communication campaign should:

- Educate the public on Blue Foods' health benefits,
- Promote sustainable seafood choices through clearer labelling,
- Collaborate with schools, retailers, and chefs to integrate sustainable Blue Foods into everyday diets.

Leveraging digital platforms, social media influencers, and food industry leaders will be key to shifting public perception.

5. Driving Economic Growth & Innovation

The Blue Food sector presents new business opportunities in value-added seafood products, circular economy models, and digital traceability solutions.

Key innovation opportunities include:

- Developing new seafood product lines (e.g., ready-to-eat meals, high-protein seafood snacks),
- Implementing blockchain technology for traceability and consumer trust,
- Supporting small businesses and startups in sustainable seafood production.

Investments in Blue Economy initiatives will create jobs, drive research, and maintain Europe's leadership in sustainable food production.

6. Reducing costs & enhancing policy coherence

Sustainable food production comes with significant socio-economic costs. To create a more efficient and optimized seafood supply chain, a new approach is needed:

- Streamline Regulations: Reduce bureaucratic barriers for seafood companies to improve efficiency and competitiveness,
- Support Innovation: Help companies and coastal communities transition to resource-efficient and innovative practices,
- Align with EU Goals: Strengthen policies to support the EU's green transition and decarbonization efforts,
- Adjust VAT rates to promote sustainable and healthy food choices such as blue foods,
- Combat Illegal Fishing: Intensify global efforts to eliminate Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

CALL TO ACTION

As part of the EU Vision for Agriculture and Food and the Oceans Pact, we urge the European Commission to seize this opportunity to develop an EU Action Plan for Blue Food that strengthens a healthy, sustainable, and resilient aquatic food system for all.

Such an Action Plan should be accompanied by appropriate funding to boost sustainable production and consumption of Blue Foods, with a focus on responsible fisheries, aquaculture, and innovation.

To ensure proper implementation, we call on the European Commission to establish an EU Blue Foods Platform with institutional and financial support, aligning Europe's policies with global sustainability initiatives and fostering research, innovation, and sustainable investments.

The EU must take decisive steps to ensure food security, enhance ocean health, and create economic opportunities for fishers, aquaculture farmers and seafood processors.

Signatories

