EU Vision 2040 for fisheries and aquaculture

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EU publishes its Vision 2040 for fisheries and aquaculture

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Commission of the Regions: Vision 2040 for fisheries and aquaculture

Annexes to the Communication

Update

The European Commission's 2040 Vision for fisheries and aquaculture sets a 15-year strategic framework to guide policy and address systemic challenges affecting fisheries, aquaculture, and processing value chains. It complements the EU Vision for Agriculture and Food and addresses a number of key priorities:

- It puts healthy ecosystems at the heart of fisheries and aquaculture
- It aims to secure the EU's supply of aquatic food
- It helps consumers make informed choices about the source of the food they buy
- It helps create the right conditions for viable fisheries and aquaculture businesses
- It acts globally to support sustainability and fairness
- It aims to support the energy transition in fisheries and aquaculture

The Vision 2040 also provides the overarching framework for the European Union (EU) strategy on fisheries external action. This aims to:

- strengthen the implementation and enforcement of rules fighting illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing
- drive Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) to enforce International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions on decent working conditions and safety at sea
- engage with regional partners through sustainable fisheries partnership agreements (SFPAs) to ensure stable access to fishing grounds for the EU fleet.

Impacted products

Fisheries and aquaculture

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What is changing?

The Vision provides an overarching strategic direction for all EU action in the area of fisheries and aquaculture. It aims to:

- accelerate the transition to a more sustainable fisheries sector through healthy fish stocks, protecting the environment and workers, and fair competition
- ensure European Union (EU) food security by diversifying supply and consumption and by increasing EU aquaculture production
- establish digital traceability of all products throughout the supply chain by 2029
- meet consumer demand for transparent information. Mandatory consumer information will be extended to prepared and preserved fishery and aquaculture products
- introduce a new simplified regulatory and administrative framework for EU aquaculture production by the end of 2027.

The EU will look to achieve this through:

- diversification and sustainable imports. By 2029, digital traceability will be required for all products – including processed products – along the supply chain. Mandatory consumer information will be extended to prepared and preserved fishery and aquaculture products
- increasing EU aquaculture production while meeting EU consumers' expectations, including requirements on animal welfare. The EU will pay attention to fair competition for its producers in comparison with imports. By the end of 2027, the Commission will propose a simplified regulatory and administrative framework for aquaculture
- diversifying fish consumption. Currently, just five species (tuna, salmon, cod, Alaska pollock and shrimp) account for 42% of EU consumption.

The Vision includes (in Annex I) the EU strategy on fishing outside the EU (see EU strategy on fisheries external action). This aims to:

- build more sustainable supply chains through effective trade rules and sustainable global fisheries management
- enforce a zero-tolerance approach to illegal fishing with the full implementation of the digital catch certificate (CATCH) – it will continue to engage in structured dialogues with non-EU countries and provide capacity building, but the EU will close its market to countries that do not make significant improvements
- tackle global overcapacity and unfair competition
- strengthen social responsibility in fisheries management frameworks, including promoting the ratification and effective implementation of the ILO's international labour standards

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- engage at regional level to ensure stable access to fishing grounds for the EU fleet in international waters – in the Northeast Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, as well as in West Africa, the Indian Ocean, and the Pacific regions – through a new generation of SFPAs.

Why?

Agriculture and fisheries face similar systemic challenges in ensuring sustainability and long-term competitiveness, food security, and preserving resources. Over 60% of aquatic food consumed in the EU today is imported. The EU aims to strengthen the sustainability of imports while improving the competitiveness and resilience of its fisheries and aquaculture sectors, including processing.

Timeline

The European Commission published its Vision 2040 on 20 October 2026.

What are the major implications for exporting countries?

The EU will act in cooperation with international organisations, including relevant international financial institutions, through instruments such as the Global Gateway cooperation, SFPAs, and mobilisation of the private sector.

It will take into account partner countries' track records in implementing commitments, international agreements, and contractual relations with the EU.

It will also seek to strengthen RFMOs, reinforcing science-based decision-making, incorporating climate change considerations into scientific work and models, and improving transparency regarding the implementation of conservation and management measures.

Background

The EU regularly re-evaluates its objectives and adapts its rules to the changing global context. Analysis of current EU rules for aquaculture and fisheries found them to be inadequate to meet the challenges of:

- inadequate fish stocks – stocks have improved for certain species but are insufficient to meet increased global demand

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- global competition – the socio-economic performance of the EU fishery and aquaculture sectors has not improved under the current Common Fisheries Policy; EU aquaculture production is stagnating, and returns on investment in the fisheries sector remain low
- climate change – the energy transition, increasing spatial competition, and geopolitical developments reinforce the need for the fisheries and aquaculture sectors to adapt and transform.

The Vision 2040 complements the EU's Vision for Agriculture and Food and builds on the Fishers of the Future foresight study, the European Ocean Pact, and the evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation. It also fits within the European Commission's current agenda for simplification, the proposed EU budget for 2028–2034, the Competitiveness Compass, the Union of Skills, the 2030 Consumer Agenda, the Bioeconomy Strategy, and the Nature Restoration Regulation.

Resources

Online resources from the European Commission:

- 2030 Consumer Agenda
- A Vision for Agriculture and Food Shaping together an attractive farming and agri-food sector for future generations
- Bioeconomy Strategy
- Competitiveness compass
- Foresight study on Fishers of the Future – overview
- Nature Restoration Regulation
- Simplification
- The 2028–2034 EU budget for a stronger Europe
- The European Ocean Pact
- Union of skills

Commission Staff Working Documents:

- Evaluation – Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy
- Roadmap for the energy transition in EU aquaculture
- Stakeholder Consultation – Synopsis Report

Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy

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Sources

Communication from the Commission: Vision 2040 for fisheries and aquaculture

Annexes to the Communication

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