



Multi-annual National Strategic Plans for the development of sustainable Aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030

Summary IRELAND

“National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development”

1. State of the aquaculture sector

The main species rearing in Ireland are Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*), Rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), Pacific oyster (*Magallana gigas*), Native oyster (*Ostrea edulis*), Mussels (*Mytilus edulis*), Seaweed (mainly *Alaria esculenta* and *Saccharina latissima*). Atlantic salmon is exclusively produced to the EU Organic Certification Standards, Rainbow trout is mainly conducted in freshwater flow-through systems, rope-grown and seabed cultured (bottom-grown) mussels. In 2020, the volume of production was 37 837 tonnes, and the value was 179,8 M€. The number of employees was 1849 in the same year.

2. Objectives for 2021 to 2027

- Building resilience and competitiveness.
- Participating in the green transition.
- Ensuring social acceptance and consumer information.
- Increasing knowledge and innovation.

Growth targets

Increase the quantity of salmon produced to organic standards (effectively all of the Irish salmon production) from 20,000 tonnes to 26,000 tonnes.

3. Objectives for Measures for 2021 to 2027 responding to the 13 key areas listed in the “*Strategic Guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030*”¹

1. Access to space and water

- Continue to work with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHLGH) and other Government bodies to support aquaculture’s participation in the national, marine spatial planning process.
- In line with Section 20: Maritime Area Planning Act 2021, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) will support a designated body, as provided for in the Act, in developing a Designated Marine Area Plan (DMAP) to reflect the strong footprint already held by Aquaculture in the marine area. Consideration of linkages between Aquaculture Information Management system (AQUAMIS) and the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) IT systems.

2. Regulatory and administrative procedures

- Introduce AQUAMIS.
- Develop support for new applicants and existing operators to access and interact with AQUAMIS.
- Review access to existing data and provide additional expert technical support to improve the quality of submissions to DAFM.
- Target resources to improve the monitoring of aquaculture activity, compliance levels and other management information to ensure aquaculture and the regulatory authority are responsive to any emerging environmental issues while also safeguarding the ability of the sector to adopt new technology as it becomes available. Include in any future review of aquaculture legislation the consideration of adaptive licensing to enable compliance with the highest standards of environmental protection, have regard for climate change policy and support the ability of the sector to adopt new technology as it becomes available.

3. Animal health and public health

- Promote good practice in farm biosecurity and good husbandry at the site level across Irish aquaculture.

¹ COM(2021)236 final

- Prioritise and develop diagnostic control measures for new and emerging aquatic diseases.
- Develop a system for near real-time animal health reporting in Irish aquaculture.
- Building on research to date, further develop a system for Norovirus monitoring of Irish Oysters to protect public health risk and commercial markets. Commission a study to investigate the ratio of infectious and non-infectious viruses in oysters at different stages of production.
- Review and update the Strategy for improved pest control on Irish salmon farms and Monitoring Protocol No. 3 for Offshore Finfish Farms – sea lice monitoring and control.
- Develop a formal protocol for the reporting and investigation of fish farm escapes.
- Foster the ongoing enhancement of Food Safety Management Systems in the Irish aquaculture supply chain.

4. Climate change adaptation and mitigation

- Collaborate nationally and internationally to understand how aquaculture systems contribute to carbon sequestration and how this can be applied commercially.
- Encourage opportunities for low trophic aquaculture species that can contribute to a low carbon economy.
- Mainstream opportunities to reduce the carbon footprint of Irish aquaculture through the wider adoption of IMTA and other low-carbon technologies.
- Assist the aquaculture supply chain to reduce its carbon footprint in the life cycle.
- Include climate change variables in environmental monitoring data collection.
- Support projects with strong climate mitigation and adaptation characteristics.

5. Producer and market organisations

Review and address fragmentation across Irish aquaculture in order to support a cohesive aquaculture supply chain to domestic, EU and other markets.

6. Control

- Improved labelling and traceability of organic products.
- Support the adoption of digital ledger technology tools for increased transparency and traceability across the value chain.

7. Diversification and adding value

- Develop an evidence-based approach for encouraging a more diverse sector with a key focus on human health, low environmental impact, and low carbon aquaculture production.
- Development of lower impact systems for all species.
- Support the industry to broaden the seafood product range and develop seafood protein leadership.
- Support aquaculture enterprises to diversify into new products and local markets.
- Investigate opportunities to sustainably diversify income from aquaculture sites.
- Continue to support quality schemes to meet the demands of the market.
- Conduct a review of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the aquaculture sector and propose mechanisms that make the sector more resilient to future global disruptions.

8. Environmental performance

- Further develop our understanding of aquaculture-derived ecosystem services and interactions with the natural capital upon which it relies.
- Develop locally based non-specialist environmental monitoring around aquaculture sites.
- Proposals that facilitate waste prevention, reuse or recycling and contribute to the elimination of single-use plastics in the sector will be supported.
- Enable aquaculture to continue to support the maintenance of Ireland's cultural heritage.
- Irish aquaculture further moves to organic seafood production where possible, meeting the highest standard available for EU producers.
- Third-party seafood sustainability certification programmes should be further developed to drive improved environmental performance.
- Strengthen links with the objectives of the Water Framework Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

9. Animal welfare

- Establish an industry-wide code of practice for animal welfare in Irish aquaculture.
- Extend the knowledge and skills base within the sector on animal welfare.

10. Communicating on EU aquaculture

- Build on existing initiatives for integrating aquaculture into the local economy with a particular focus on tourism and the local food supply chain.
- Seafood Sustainability Programmes should be further promoted to provide independent evidence to customers of good practices.
- Further develop engagement with schools on the role of aquaculture in local economies.

11. Integration in local communities

- Develop synergies between aquaculture and other local maritime economic activities to support their coexistence and mutual development.
- Collaborate with EU and international partners to learn and apply best practices in integrating aquaculture into local economies.

12. Data and monitoring

- Contribute to the harmonisation of environmental data collection, analysis and sharing across the different agencies involved in the protection and sustainable use of Ireland's waters.
- Baseline environmental monitoring.
- Review of the Data Collection Framework (DCF) data collection in Irish aquaculture in line with the Data Collection Framework (EU Multiannual Data Collection Programme applicable from 2022).
- Further develop the national seafood survey to provide socio-economic data on the contribution of aquaculture to the Irish local economy.
- Integration of aquaculture supply chain data storage, management, and use.

13. Knowledge and innovation

- Prepare a Research, Technological Development, and Innovation (RTDI) Roadmap.
- Investigate the establishment of an Aquaculture Innovation Fund.
- Investigate delivering an innovation focus within Ireland's Seafood Innovation Centre.
- Facilitate knowledge transfer.
- Develop a human capacity plan for Irish aquaculture.
- Promote opportunities for co-location and synergistic development of training and skills courses, with other maritime and agri-food sectors.
- Provide support for general management, leadership, and business skills.

4. Funding

The specific funding mechanisms to support this plan will be developed in Ireland's Seafood Development Programme 2021 - 2027 under the new European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) and through other National and EU funding mechanisms of relevance to the sector. Given the role of the use of aquaculture in rural and regional development, EU funds other than EMFAF may be considered to support the implementation of the NSPSA (e.g., ERDF, ESF, ERDAF funds for rural development).