

Environmental Performance

Workshop - Concept paper

The “**Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030**”¹ – adopted by the European Commission in May 2021 – identify environmental performance as a key area for consideration to ensure the sustainable development of the aquaculture sector. Section 2.2.1 of the Strategic Guidelines details specific considerations concerning environmental performance, including in relation to EU Green Deal and zero pollution ambitions. Furthermore, the guidelines suggest that the environmental performance of the EU aquaculture sector may be further improved through ensuring that environmental legislation is applied, and its objectives are met; further mitigating the impact of aquaculture; and promoting aquaculture with lower environmental impact and aquaculture that provides ecosystem services.

In line with the Annex to the above-mentioned Guidelines, a first draft package of a “*Guidance Document on Environmental Performance*” has been prepared by the European Union Aquaculture Assistance Mechanism (AAM). The **aim of this draft guidance document** is to provide an easily readable and user-friendly document which will help Member States, aquaculture producers and other relevant stakeholders to increase further the environmental performance of aquaculture activities in the EU. Given the broad scope of the topics covered in the action described in the Annex to the Guidelines, guidance will be built in several work packages.

The **first package** should provide an overview of EU environmental legislation relevant to aquaculture (section on the implementation of the EU environmental regulatory framework is not included in the draft that will be discussed at the workshop), and map and present good practices in environmental performance. Specifically, the latter aims at promoting measures that take environmental performance beyond the regulatory baseline and demonstrate excellence or innovation in promoting a balance between aquaculture and the natural environment. Key topics addressed include, for instance, sustainable feed, treatments and residues, nutrient balanced sites, circularity and zero waste, environmental monitoring systems and containment, and the use of genetic aquatic resources and selective breeding.

NB: *the draft guidance document does not reflect an official or agreed position of the European Commission and should not be distributed at this stage.*

Future packages will consider good practices on reduction of carbon footprint, aquaculture with lower environmental impact and energy efficiency. They will also address the identification of environmental indicators and voluntary targets for environmental performance, including a reference method to determine the carbon footprint and impact on ecosystems of aquaculture production, as well as the creation of a reference monitoring system for the aquaculture sector to assess progress and facilitate informed decision-making and long-term planning.

The **purpose of the workshop** is to support the finalisation of the above-mentioned first package of the “*Guidance Document on Environmental Performance*” currently in preparation by the AAM.

In light of this, the aim is to collect at the workshop the views from all participants on the document, identify and fill in gaps, as well as suggest recommendations that will be presented at the plenary session.

For the workshop to prove a success, it is expected that participants will undertake a thorough preparation by reading the draft package of the guidance document and considering answers to the questions raised below. Other questions and comments are also actively encouraged at the workshop.

¹ COM (2021) 236 final, adopted by the Commission on 12th May 2021: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0236>.

Questions

- The document is intended for informed aquaculture stakeholders at the national, regional, and local level. Do you consider the document **sufficiently clear, practical, and user-friendly**? If not, how could it be improved?
- Which of the selected **topics** could be further explored in the document in chapter 4 and in the factsheets?
- Mindful this document relates only to the **first work package**; do you consider any key areas to have been missed?
- **Environmental performance as per factsheet:**
 - Are the environmental performance topics included in the 10 factsheets useful? If not, which alternative topics should be added or which topics amended?
 - Are you able to suggest additional good practices on environmental performance that could be included in the document?
 - Are you aware of any guidance at the national and/or regional level on the application of the EU environmental legislation to the aquaculture sector? Can you share any Guidance Document about that?
 - Are you aware of any predictive models (or even better species-specific predictive models) commonly used in the permit process for the opening of new net pens facilities in your country?
 - Regarding providing guidance to producers on how to perform the internal control of emissions/releases, are you aware of any reference to environmental permits? If yes, what conditions are outlined in the environmental permit?
 - Are you aware of any other regional cooperation (HELCOM and UNEP/MAP are in the document) that considers the cumulative effect of aquaculture facilities?
 - Regarding adopting feed formulated with sustainable alternative ingredients, are you aware of any good practices for sustainable and reliable sourcing of such ingredients, ideally locally?
 - Are there strategies (public or private) to avoid plastic litter from the aquaculture industry in your country? Are you aware of coordinated strategies within different countries? Is the industry participating actively in these strategies?
 - Are you aware of actions to control predators where key stakeholders (even from different countries) are cooperating to deal with these issues?
 - Are you aware of any example of food production where the circularity is promoted between aquaculture and agriculture (e.g. use of sludge as manure)?
 - Regarding circularity, the aquaculture industry should foster synergies with other economic activities to take advantage of its by-products. Are you aware of any examples of such synergies within research and innovation (e.g. clusters)? Are you aware of examples with by-products from the processing of molluscs (e.g. shells) or from shrimp farming?
 - Are you aware of examples of eco-friendly compounds and medicines that have replaced conventional treatment to improve the sector's environmental footprint?
 - Are you aware of eco-friendly alternatives to other chemicals used in aquaculture such as antifoulants?
 - Are you aware of any innovative practice supporting the environmental performance of aquaculture that is not mentioned in the draft package?

Please send your input to David Bassett (david@eatip.eu) before the workshop **by 13th October 2023** or present it during the workshop.

After discussing these questions at the workshop, **concrete conclusions** will be drawn that will be **presented in the plenary session**.
