



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE/A4/GH (2021)

Subject: MAC advice on voluntary sustainability claims

Dear Mr. Pastoor,

Thank you for the MAC advice of 15 June 2021 on voluntary sustainability claims on fishery and aquaculture products, including ecolabels and certification schemes.

Private certification schemes and voluntary sustainability claims play an important role in the seafood sector. With growing consumer awareness and more demand for sustainability information, the occurrence and take-up of such schemes and claims is bound to increase further. Moreover, the European Green Deal envisages regulatory action in this area, in particular under the Farm to Fork Strategy and the Circular Economy Action Plan. Therefore, the MAC's advice is pertinent and comes at the right time.

We take note of the MAC's recommendations. Indeed, several of the actions planned under the Green Deal aim precisely at the points raised in the recommendations. For instance, ensuring the robustness of green claims and preventing 'greenwashing' are among the key objectives of the Commission's initiatives on substantiating green claims and green consumer empowerment. While these are horizontal actions, they will surely affect the seafood sector in a positive manner. We also draw your attention to a study assessing voluntary claims on fishery and aquaculture products. The study was undertaken by a contractor for the Commission and published in May 2019¹.

¹ <https://op.europa.eu/fr/publication-detail/-/publication/78fd2eb2-7b71-11e9-9f05-01aa75ed71a1>

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Moreover, we are currently revising the marketing standards for fisheries and aquaculture products. As you know, we consider introducing specific sustainability aspects in the standards in order to provide more transparency on these aspects along the value chain and to consumers. The approach we envisage takes into account the important role of private certification schemes and aims at potentially complementing such schemes, both in terms of information provided and affordability for producers. Finally, we would like to point out that support for accessing certification schemes is available under the EMFAF, on condition that the national competent authorities provided this possibility in their operational programme. Producer organisations may support their members to access certification schemes through dedicated measures in their production and marketing plan.

On the aforementioned initiatives and actions, we actively involved the MAC and we will continue doing so in the future. We are grateful for the feedback that we have received in this respect. Should you have any further queries, please contact Ms Pascale COLSON, coordinator of the Advisory Councils (Pascale.COLSON@ec.europa.eu; +32.2.295.62.73), who will forward it to relevant colleagues.

Yours sincerely,

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