

Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Presidency priorities for fisheries

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01

The Belgian Fisheries and Aquaculture sectors



Fisheries

- Belgian fleet:
 - 59 active vessels
 - Active in North Sea, North Western Waters, South Western Waters
 - Mainly beamtrawl 78%
- Main fishing grounds:
 - Eastern Channel 28%
 - Central North Sea 18%
 - South East Ireland 15%
 - Southern North Sea 13%
 - Irish Sea 8%
 - Bristol Channel 8%
 - Western Channel 7%
- Landings: 79% national ports (Zeebrugge, Oostende, Nieuwpoort), 21% international ports
- Species:
 - Mixed fisheries, focused on flatfish
 - Top 5 in 2022: Sole, plaice, squid, skates and rays, shrimp
 - Total landings in 2022: 16,932 ton - €97,3 mln

Aquaculture

- Small but diverse aquaculture sector
 - 200t for human consumption
 - Value of €1,3 mln
 - 40-50 producers, majority of small-scale trout producers in Wallonia
 - In Flanders mostly producers of freshwater cod, trout, zander, shrimp, caviar, oysters and mussels
 - 140 employees
- Most use modern installations, such as Recirculating Aquaculture Systems (RAS) or are active in marine aquaculture

02

Priorities for the Belgian Presidency





**PROTECT,
STRENGTHEN,
PREPARE**

Agriculture & Fisheries: priorities



A sustainable, resilient and future-proof agri-food and fisheries sector



Ensuring food security & autonomy

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Protect – strengthen – prepare

- Protect the EU fisheries and aquaculture sectors against external pressures
- Strengthen the EU fisheries and aquaculture sectors via legislation and actions that support those sectors
- Prepare the EU fisheries and aquaculture sectors for future challenges

03

Visserij Verduurzaamt: sustainability



Visserij Verduurzaamt

- 20 year ago:
 - No attention to sustainability
 - No dialogue between sector, science & NGO's
- Today:
 - Visserij Verduurzaamt: Fisheries improvement programme, long-term commitment for sustainability
 - 11 indicators
 - Goal
 - For policy makers: enhance sustainability
 - For fishers: market access
 - Within context of Covenant: formal agreement between minister, administration, sector, NGO's and science to make the Belgian fisheries sector and its supply chain more sustainable



04

VALDUVIS: traceability



VALDUVIS

- Objective and scientific tool to measure and make visible sustainability of fishing activities within context of Visserij Verduurzaamt
- 3 pillars – 11 indicators:
 - Ecological: 5 (stock, season, bottom impact, fuel usage, environmentally responsible fishery)
 - Economic: 3 (profitability, fishery effort, financial stability)
 - Social: 3 (safety and health, animal welfare, remuneration)
- Data-gathering: via logbooks, ICES advice and annual accounts
- Almost whole fleet covered – score is yearly calculated
- Statement of commitment by ship owner





05 **VIStools: innovation**



VIStools and other innovations

- Innovative high-tech technique allowing for precision fishery:
 - More and better data-gathering
 - More selective fisheries with less environmental impact
 - More efficient fishing and management of vessels and activities
 - More valorisation
- Centralisation of data:
 - The vessel as data platform
 - Live view
 - Co-creation of sector and scientists
- VISIM:
 - Image-recognition system (species, size...)
 - More complete data-gathering via self-sampling, leading to more accurate advice and ecosystem management
- GeoVis:
 - Online tool providing spatial visualization of fisheries-related data and marine spatial planning
 - Essential for precision fisheries

06

Preparing for the future



Preparing for the future

- Cooperation between fishers and scientists, mutual trust and innovation is part of solution for problems encountered by the EU fleet e.g.:
 - Quota fluctuations
 - Increased control commitments and monitoring obligations
 - Landing obligation
 - Sustainable transition of the fleets
 - Etc
- Innovation, traceability and sustainability are key, alongside financial support and legislation, supportive of the move to more sustainable production systems, fishing gears and techniques, and protect the most vulnerable marine areas.

**THANK YOU FOR
YOUR ATTENTION**





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