



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE.A.4/NG

Dear Ms Bermudez,

Thank you very much for the advice of the Market Advisory Council (MAC) on Energy Transition in EU Fisheries and Aquaculture which I have read it with interest.

Your contribution is important to the development and implementation of a long-term strategy for the energy transition in the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector. Your engagement and your inputs, in the Energy Transition Partnership (ETP) for the EU Fisheries and Aquaculture ⁽¹⁾ and your advice on the Communication ⁽²⁾, feed into our collective efforts to build the path towards the energy transition of the sector.

The Communication has the dual objectives of enhancing the sector's resilience by reducing its dependence on fossil fuels and reducing its greenhouse gas emissions. I am pleased to inform you that its implementation is at full pace with 19 out of the 27 proposed actions on-going. This is partly thanks to the advancement and discussions within the ETP. Our partnership aims to engage all stakeholders, including the processing industry, in accelerating the sector's energy transition. Organised partnership discussions took place in 2023 and at the beginning of this year through 3 thematic workshops ⁽³⁾ covering the challenges faced by the sector, including financing, innovation, research and knowledge, and skills. The strong stakeholder engagement showed a successful way forward for the sector's energy transition.

⁽¹⁾ [Energy Transition Partnership - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁽²⁾ [Communication from the Commission: On the Energy Transition of the EU Fisheries and Aquaculture sector - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁽³⁾ [The workshops - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

Ms Yobana Bermudez
Chair
Market Advisory Council
yobana.bermudez@conxemar.com
Regus EU Commission
6 Rond-Point Robert Schuman
1040 Brussels
BELGIUM

To further develop a bottom-up approach with all stakeholders of the sector, I am pleased to inform you that we are currently setting up an Assistance Mechanism to the ETP to continue discussions with the sector at large. The support mechanism will allow an inclusive and participatory development of the Energy Transition roadmap for EU fisheries and aquaculture. One of the main actions of the Assistance Mechanism will be the launch of a Support Group with 10 coordinators representing the wide range of stakeholders, including the processing industry. To this end, a call for expression of interest will soon be published and disseminated on the ETP channels during the month of July. I warmly invite the MAC to promote this call among their partners and sectors.

The work of the ETP and the Support Group will enhance coordination, and cooperation between stakeholders, contributing to the drafting of a common roadmap for the energy transition towards climate neutrality by 2050. The roadmap will aim at covering every segment of the fisheries and aquaculture sector with adapted and workable solutions and rely on synergies with energy transition initiatives from other sectors such as ports and infrastructure.

As regards bridging the knowledge and technological gaps, we are fully aware that the energy transition faces challenges due to the lack of practical technological and supply solutions. The European Commission is addressing this issue and recently published the results of the study on available technologies for the energy transition in the fisheries and aquaculture sector and their respective costs and benefits ⁽⁴⁾. This study reflects and takes into consideration the diversity of the sector and is the first step towards providing detailed information about the efficiency across the different solutions. It will also help the sector to target financial incentives and investments and understand how to attract investment in the energy transition of the European fishing fleet and aquaculture.

Furthermore, the European Commission is working on how to address technological gaps through R&I. We have, for instance, promoted projects focussing on low-carbon and less impactful fishing techniques under the Mission Ocean calls. DG MARE is also following a €2.2 million European Parliament pilot project call ⁽⁵⁾ that closed recently and aims to develop a demonstrator vessel for testing technologies enabling the energy transition. We intend to further continue supporting demonstration projects and studies on innovative gears, digitalisation, and alternative fuels. At the same time, we will continue increasing the visibility and awareness on the different available innovations, through actions like the update of the Compendium of best practices ⁽⁶⁾.

As regards skill development, it is a key component of our Energy transition initiative. We have organised a workshop with the ETP on Skills on 19 April to identify gaps and challenges and are exploring the possibility of organising calls within the Blue Careers Initiative ⁽⁷⁾ to support training and development in energy transition in 2026. We will also, as mentioned in the Communication, explore possibilities for setting up a virtual academy program or to complement existing support training programmes at EU level

⁽⁴⁾ [Techno-economic analysis for the energy transition of the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁽⁵⁾ [Pilot Project: Fostering energy transition in the fisheries sector \(Demonstrator of a fishing vessel\) - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁽⁶⁾ [Best practices on energy transition in fisheries and aquaculture - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁽⁷⁾ [Eight EMFAF projects kickstarted their work to develop the next generation of blue skills - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

that can foster the reinforcement of skills on energy transition in the sector. However, it is important to note that education remains within the remit of the Member States - the Commission can only play a supportive role. However, we remain fully engaged in supporting the sector's transition. One key component of the actions led under the Assistance Mechanism will be to launch a Mentorship Program to disseminate knowledge on the opportunities available in the EU, but also at local level to achieve the Energy Transition in Fisheries and aquaculture through the creation and coordination of a network of Mentors at national level. The program will also serve to promote the adoption of the technologies and practices that can address fishing and aquaculture CO₂ emissions and increase energy efficiency.

At the same time, we are also advancing regarding the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

The Fisheries and Ocean package adopted by the Commission in 2023, presents a package of measures to improve the sustainability and resilience of the EU's fisheries and aquaculture sector. It includes four elements:

- A Communication on the Energy Transition of the EU Fisheries and Aquaculture sector;
- an Action Plan to protect and restore marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries;
- a Communication on the common fisheries policy today and tomorrow; and
- a Report on the Common Market Organisation for fishery and aquaculture products.

Following this package, we have launched a study supporting the evaluation of the landing obligation to which an e-survey has been sent out to stakeholders including the Advisory Councils. Moreover, the Commission has launched an EU-wide participatory foresight project Fishers of the Future ⁽⁸⁾ to forecast the role of fishers in society. This project aims to look ahead and understand how fishers envisage their future, and we also encourage your support and participation in it.

In March 2024, former Commissioner Sinkevičius announced that a full evaluation of the CFP Regulation will be carried out. The decision to undertake a full evaluation of the CFP Regulation comes as a follow up to the package and its subsequent dialogue. In particular, the discussions with, and recommendations from the European Parliament and Fisheries Council, through Parliamentary reports and Presidency conclusions, called for an evaluation of the policy since its last reform.

Public feedback is now being collected by the Commission via the official better regulation platform, the have your say portal ⁽⁹⁾, through which we encourage you to give your feedback or any documents you wish to highlight by 6 September 2024.

The evaluation will be carried out in accordance with the Commission's Better Regulation standards and covers the CFP Regulation in all its aspects looking at its functioning and impact and providing answers to the five key evaluation criteria:

⁽⁸⁾ [Fishers of the Future](#)

⁽⁹⁾ [have your say portal](#)

efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, coherence (internally and externally) and added value.

The full evaluation of the CFP will provide a good basis to make informed decisions on how best to continue implementing the policy and if necessary, propose adjustments in the years ahead to meet the challenges that we know and for those that are coming supporting studies to scrutinise the performance of the current CFP framework toward current and emerging needs.

I appreciate your insights on the business environment and can ensure you that we are committed to improving it. The Commission recognises that the energy transition will require a significant financial effort, supported by private and public investment. The aforementioned study on technologies provides an indication of the investment effort and the financial benefits that the energy transition of the fisheries and aquaculture will entail. The overall costs will of course also depend on forthcoming technological advances. As regards funding and financial instruments in place, the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) provides funding opportunities to support the sector to transition towards more energy efficient and climate-neutral solutions through innovation and fleet modernisation. As to other sources of funding, we recognise the financing challenges outlined in the Communication and are exploring additional financing opportunities, including in collaboration with the European Investment Bank and the private sector. Regarding the specific guidance on access to funds and assistance mechanisms, we took note of your comments related to funds available for the processing industries and will consider it in the updates of our Guide on financing opportunities for the sector ⁽¹⁰⁾.

As regards the need for strong monitoring and reporting on carbon footprint to follow the progress in emission reduction, the European Commission is committed to improve the availability and quality of data on CO₂ emissions currently based on the work of the STECF. The latest Blue Economy report ⁽¹¹⁾ features an overview of CO₂ emissions by type of fishing technique and we will continue working on improving the quality of the data, through discussions with experts and further analysis, towards the development of targets for the sector.

Concerning, the implementation and utilisation of fiscal tools to tax energy consumption, the Commission is aware and monitoring closely the current global context of fuel prices and their impact on the fisheries sector, among others. Importantly, in numerous countries, maritime fuel either remains untaxed or is subject to reduced tax rates. Since large-scale industrial vessels can opt for refuelling through bunkering on the high seas, targeting non-specific fuel subsidies risks negatively impacting small scale fisheries while encouraging refuelling on the high seas, introducing inherent risks to the marine environment. Importantly, the Commission is fully committed to the decarbonisation of the EU fishing fleet, which will be reflected in the future energy transition for the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector roadmap where we will include measurable milestones and actions towards a climate neutral sector by 2050. The Commission will also continue to promote a level-playing field and transparency under the context of the WTO and IMO.

⁽¹⁰⁾ [Guide and tool on financing the energy transition in fisheries and aquaculture - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/euro-observatory/en/guide-and-tool-on-financing-the-energy-transition-in-fisheries-and-aquaculture)

⁽¹¹⁾ [The EU blue economy report 2024 - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/euro-observatory/en/blue-economy-report-2024)

We take note of your comments on the potential reduction of the supply to decrease the sector's carbon footprint and will analyse how to ensure that the initiative does not create negative externalities, such as a potential increase in reliance on imports of fishery and aquaculture products, while also keeping in mind the potential increase in price for EU products.

Finally, the energy transition and reduction of CO₂ emissions could bolster the resilience and competitiveness of the EU fishery and aquaculture value chains, minimise vulnerabilities, increase profitability by stabilising production costs and reducing days at sea, and offer more attractive products to environmentally aware consumers. It remains important to study the impact of the energy transition on the market and we welcome any data you may have on this topic.

This advice provides a clear picture and examples of your concerns. Knowing and understanding these is crucial to define a strong and realistic long-term strategy for the transition. Your advice and future engagement, including in the ETP, is therefore highly welcomed by the Commission. The inevitable energy transition will require a long-term commitment from all stakeholders. Therefore, I would cordially invite your organisation to a continued strong engagement so that together we can move ahead in the transition towards a more resilient and sustainable sector.

I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Julia Rubeck, our Advisory Councils coordinator, via the functional mailbox MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu.

Yours sincerely,

Kestutis SADAUSKAS
On behalf of Charlina VITCHEVA

c.c.: Pedro Reis Santos secretary@marketac.eu