

On the situation of organic aquaculture in the EU and an outlook for the future

Background

The Farm to Fork Strategy¹ is at the heart of the Green Deal². It faces the challenges of sustainable food systems and recognises the inextricable links between healthy people, healthy societies and a healthy planet. This strategy, and also the Biodiversity strategy³, address organic production and consider that the market for organic food is to continue growing and that organic farming needs to be further promoted. An EU Action Plan on organic farming⁴ has been proposed by the European Commission in 2021 to help Member States stimulate both supply and demand for organic products. Commission Regulation (EC) 889/2008 laid down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) 834/2007 on organic production and labelling. A more recent regulation was then adopted (Regulation (EU) 2018/848)⁵ addressing mismatches.

"The challenge of 25% of European agricultural land becoming organic in 2030: what about our waters?"

A growth objective for organic production has been set by the European Commission. It aims *to dedicate at least 25% of EU's agricultural land to organic farming by 2030 and a significant increase in organic aquaculture*. The European Commission's 2021 aquaculture strategic guidelines⁶ also encourage Member States and stakeholders to support increases in organic aquaculture production.

By 2020 organic farming in general accounted for 9,1% of agricultural land at EU 27 level. Consumption of organic products is slowly on the increase, having reached EUR 44,8 billion at EU 27 level, accounting for 4,7% of EU food consumption (including aquatic food). The total organic aquaculture production at EU 27 level in 2020 was estimated at 74.032 tonnes, representing only 6,4% of the total EU aquaculture production. Based on data collected by a EUMOFA study⁷, the main aquatic species produced as organic in the EU in 2020 were mussels (41.936 tonnes, 10 % of total

¹ The Farm to Fork strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system: https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy_en#Strategy

² The European Green Deal. Striving to be the first climate-neutral continent: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

³ EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030: Bringing nature back into our lives: https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/biodiversity-strategy-2030_en

⁴ Action plan for organic production in the EU: https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/organic-farming/organic-action-plan_en

⁵ Regulation (EU) 2018/848 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018R0848&from=en>

⁶ Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030: https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/ocean/blue-economy/aquaculture/aquaculture-guidelines_en

⁷ EUMOFA 2022. Organic aquaculture in the EU: https://www.eumofa.eu/documents/20178/432372/Organic-aquaculture-in-the-EU_final-report_ONLINE.pdf