

PRESS RELEASE: EBCD and the EU Seafood Alliance engage with Commissioner Fitto's Cabinet on the need for an EU Blue Foods Action Plan

On 20 October, representatives from the **European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD)** and the **EU Seafood Alliance** - composed of **EAPO, Européche, FEAP, and Seafood Europe (former AIPCE.CEP)** - met with the **cabinet of the Commissioner for Cohesions and Reforms, Raffaele Fitto**, to discuss the urgent need to strengthen EU's approach to blue foods.

The delegation included **Despina Symons** (EBCD), **Esben Sverdrup-Jensen** (EAPO), **Anne-France Mattlet** (Europêche), **Szilvia Mihálffy** (FEAP), and **Katarina Sipic** (Seafood Europe - AIPCE.CEP).

The organisations reiterated their shared call for the **development of an EU Action Plan for Blue Foods**, building on the momentum generated by the recent **Ocean Pact**. The group emphasised that fisheries and aquaculture — key providers of healthy, low-carbon, and nutritious food — should be recognised as **strategic sectors** within the EU's food systems framework.

"The Commission linked agriculture and food in its *Vision for Food and Agriculture 2040*; the same ambition must now be applied to fisheries and aquaculture through a Blue Food Action Plan embedded in the *Vision for Fisheries and Aquaculture 2040*," the group underlined.

During the meeting, the representatives stressed the importance of:

- **Promoting competitiveness** through simplification of administrative procedures and a genuine **level playing field**;
- **Attracting young people** to the fishing and aquaculture sectors through targeted investment allowing for modernisation and innovation;
- **Strengthening policy cohesion and coherence** across legislation impacting food systems and blue economy; and
- **Positioning blue food products as strategic to Europe's food security, climate and biodiversity goals, and rural and coastal development.**

EBCD and the EU Seafood Alliance agreed that **many challenges could be unlocked through a comprehensive EU Action Plan on Blue Foods**, which would support innovation, research, investment, and the decarbonisation of the seafood value chain.

Such an initiative, they argued, would ensure that the EU becomes a global leader in sustainable food systems and aligns with its commitments under the Ocean Pact and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Organisations

EBCD: The European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD) is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) founded in 1989 and based in Brussels (Belgium). EBCD supports science-based solutions, full stakeholder participation, due consideration for the socio-economic aspects and respect for cultural diversity, while specializing in maritime affairs, fisheries, aquaculture and oceans governance. EBCD promotes the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources both in Europe and worldwide.

Europêche: Europêche is the representative body for fishermen in the European Union.

EAPO: The European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO) was founded in 1980 and is unifying 31 Producers Organisations among 12 EU Member States. As an association of European recognised Producers Organisations, our key role is to assist our members, and the people onboard the 4.000 fishing vessels they represent in achieving the objectives of the Common Fishery Policy (CFP) and the Common Market Organisation (CMO) for fishery and aquaculture products. EAPO aims to strengthen the cooperation between European POs by looking for common grounds in addressing the challenges for European fisheries, such as securing sustainable food production through socio-economic viability, with respect for the environment, cultural heritage and livelihoods.

FEAP: The Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP) is the united voice of professional fish farmers in Europe. Representing 24 national associations and around 14,000 enterprises, FEAP promotes sustainable aquaculture by engaging with EU institutions, international organisations, and stakeholders to secure a competitive and responsible future for Europe's fish farming sector.

Seafood Europe - AIPCE.CEP: AIPCE (EU Fish Processors and Traders Association) and CEP (European Federation of National Organizations of Importers and Exporters of Fish) were established in 1959 and collaborate on the basis of a Co-operation Agreement. Today the associations represent 15 National Associations from 9 Member States and 2 Third countries (UK, Norway), account for more than 3,900 enterprises and 128,000 persons (more than 80% representativeness at EU level). The value of the output of the industry represented by AIPCE.CEP amounts to around EUR 34 billion.