AT A GLANCE

Requested by the PECH Committee

European Parliament

Workshop on the European Green Deal – Challenges and opportunities for EU fisheries and aquaculture – Part III: Food security aspects

See the full study

With its **European Green Deal** (EGD), the European Commission has placed climate action at the heart of a wide range of legislative and non-legislative initiatives that include ambitious goals: achieving **climate-neutrality by 2050**, addressing the challenges of sustainability in the food supply chain, as well as preserving and restoring biodiversity.

The study explores how initiatives within the 'European Green Deal' may impact food security in EU fisheries and aquaculture.

Main observations

The main policy approaches of the EGD are aligned with EU policies and actions for sustainable seafood production. A lack of **action on climate change** has direct, severe consequences for fisheries and aquaculture with a predicted decrease in global catches that particularly impacts populations already facing food insecurity. This reduced productivity also impacts aquaculture as 2/3 of production currently depends on feed derived from wild fisheries. Climate change also presents challenges from ocean acidification, severe weather and increased disease risk with rising temperatures.

Farm to Fork (F2F), the EU's food production strategy, has the most direct and positive policy implications for long-term food security. Fisheries and aquaculture can produce low carbon animal protein relative to land-based production. Blue Farming promotes the expansion of shellfish and algae production in the EU. Other EGD policy initiatives such as the **Fit for 55 package** and the **EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030** are expected to disincentivise the significant EU fisheries and aquaculture production that is fuel intensive and damaging to benthic habitats.

EU dependence on seafood imports.

In 2020 the EU produced 5 million tonnes of fisheries (3.9 million tonnes) and aquaculture (1.1 million tonnes) products and is the **seventh largest global seafood producer**. However, people living in the EU consume more than twice as much as they produce.

EU seafood **consumption** is supplied by an increasing amount of extra-EU imports. China and other Asian countries remain important reprocessing centres for seafood destined for the EU, but this has declined following the COVID-19 pandemic. EU companies are developing shorter supply chains with more added value processing closer to landing and aquaculture production centres.

The EU's **Sustainable Fishery Partnership Agreements** (SFPAs) with non-EU countries contribute about 9% of EU fisheries production. SFPAs already seek to avoid negative impacts on the food security of the non-EU countries, but they have the potential to make a positive contribution to their food security.

EU aquaculture production

The European Commission recently adopted new "*Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and*

Access this note

Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies
Directorate-General for Internal Policies of the Union
Authors: Rod CAPPELL and Tim HUNTINGTON
PE752.451 – October 2023

competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030". These align with the development objectives set out in the EGD, with the potential for EU aquaculture to support and diversify seafood production highlighted in the Farm to Fork Strategy.

Conclusions and policy recommendations

Food security is fundamentally compromised if the supply of that food is not from **sustainable production**. This principle should **apply to all fisheries and aquaculture** products, irrespective of source, i.e. EU fisheries production, aquaculture and imports.

The F2F Strategy is more focused on land-based production systems but does recognise the need for an accelerated shift to **sustainable fish and seafood** production.

The F2F Strategy aligns with current thinking in both **mitigating and adapting to climate change** in fisheries and aquaculture, and the overall progression towards carbon zero. Given the impact of high energy prices on profitability, this is a commercial as well as an environmental necessity.

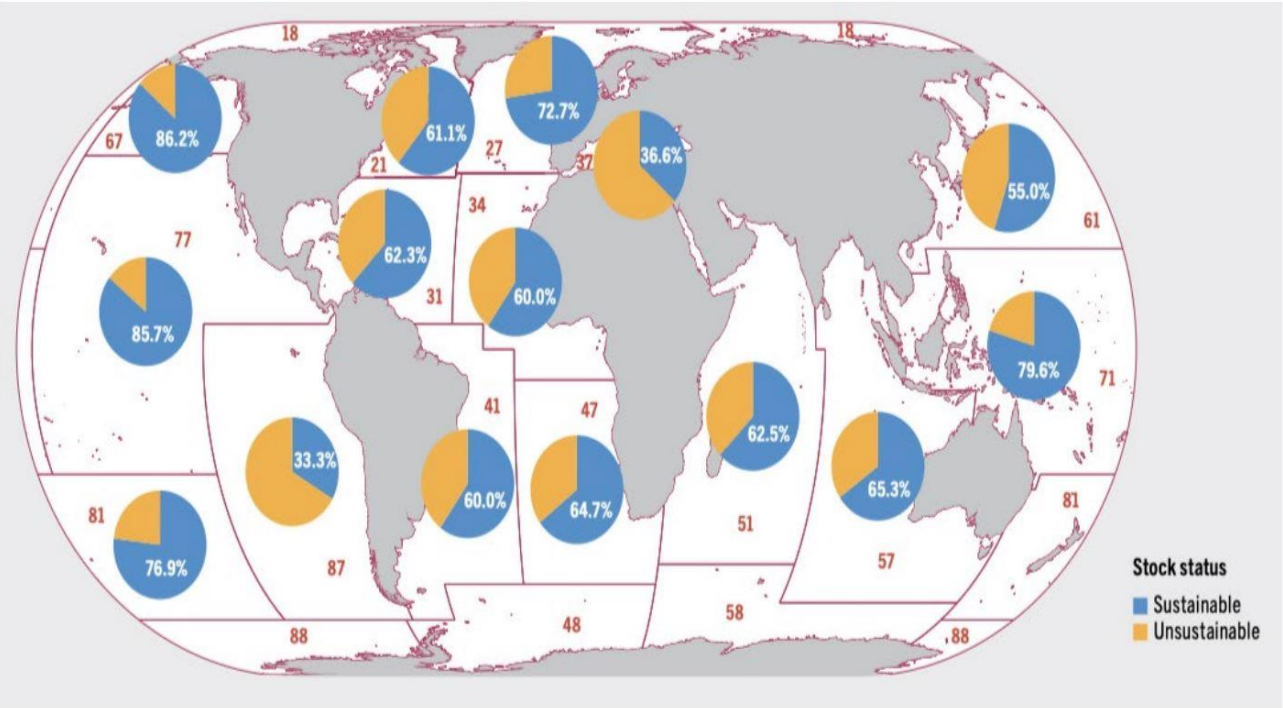
Improving food security from fisheries requires **sustainable stocks**. These result from effective management, sound science, a fit for purpose control regulation and tackling Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUU) globally.

Reducing the environmental impacts from capture fisheries requires improved fuel efficiency, a transition to clean fuels & renewable energies, and effective measures to reduce the impact on sensitive benthic habitats and bycatch.

A focus on **low-trophic aquaculture** is key and this needs to be supported by market development and consumer behavioural change. Higher trophic level aquaculture (e.g. most finfish farming) needs to undergo change to reduce its energy use across the life cycle. Better **animal welfare** and a greater move to **organic farming** will support this process.

With the EU's reliance on imports, improvements to food security from **imported seafood** (market standards, traceability, labelling) and its **supply chains** are also needed.

Percentage of biologically sustainable and unsustainable fishery stocks by FAO major fishing area, 2019



Source: FAO, 2022

The present note is based on the study "*Workshop on the European Green Deal – Challenges and opportunities for EU fisheries and aquaculture – Part III: Food security aspects*", authored by: Poseidon: Rod CAPPELL and Tim HUNTINGTON, published in: October 2023.

Responsible for this At a Glance Note: Kinga OSTANSKA & Marcus BREUER,
Contact: Poldep-cohesion@ep.europa.eu; Further information: www.research4committees.blog/pech. Follow us: @PolicyPECH
This document is available at: www.europarl.europa.eu/supporting-analyses