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for Malta**
2021 - 2027

PUBLIC CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

**EUROPEAN MARITIME, FISHERIES AND
AQUACULTURE FUND**

September 2021



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIAT
FOR EUROPEAN FUNDS

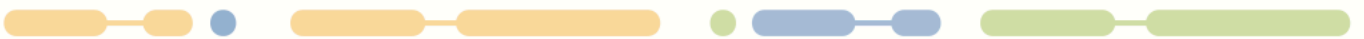


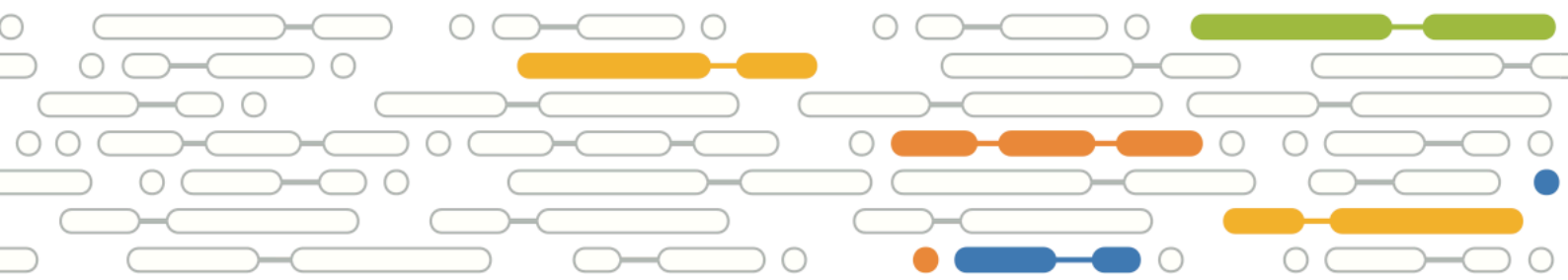
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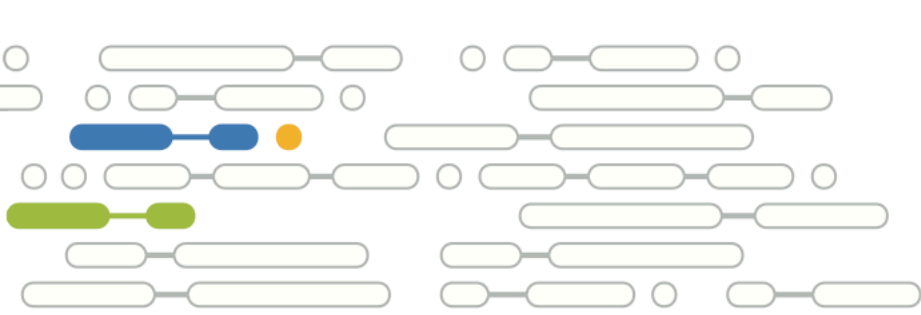
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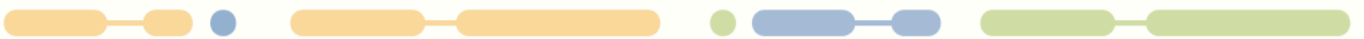
List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Name
AFM	Armed Forces of Malta
AIS	Automatic Identification System
ALE	Administrative Law Enforcement
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CBS	Capture Based Species
CCS	Closed Cycle Species
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CF	Cohesion Fund
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy
EC	European Commission
EMFAF	European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund
ERA	Environment Resources Authority
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ERS	Electronic Reporting Systems
EU	European Union
GT	Gross tonnage
IAS	Invasive Alien Species
IMTA	Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture
IUU	Illegal Unreported and Unregulated fisheries
JTF	Just Transition Fund
LS	Long Scale
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MSY	Maximum Sustainable Yield
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NSO	National Statistics Office
SSCF	Small Scale Coastal Fisheries
STECF	Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries
VDS	Vessel Detection Systems





Introduction



1. Introduction

The Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2021-2027 provides an important opportunity for Malta to support investment in its Fisheries and Aquaculture Sectors, which constitute an important resource for Malta. Such support will primarily be implemented under the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) Programme, which continues to represent a main funding arm for investment in the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sectors in Malta. The EMFAF programme will complement other EU funded interventions and investments.

The EMFAF 2021 – 2027 Programme will build upon the previous Programming period and aim to maximise the added value of public investment and to contribute towards the horizontal policy objectives of the Union (resilience, green transition, digital transition). Furthermore, the Programme will particularly support small-scale coastal fisheries, promote research in aquaculture as well as protect and restore the marine environment.

With a total budget (EU+MT share) of some EUR 31 million¹, the EMFAF programme will have the following three (3) priorities and will enable Malta to implement necessary investments in line with the respective national policies:

Priority 1: Fostering sustainable fisheries and the restoration and conservation of aquatic biological resources.

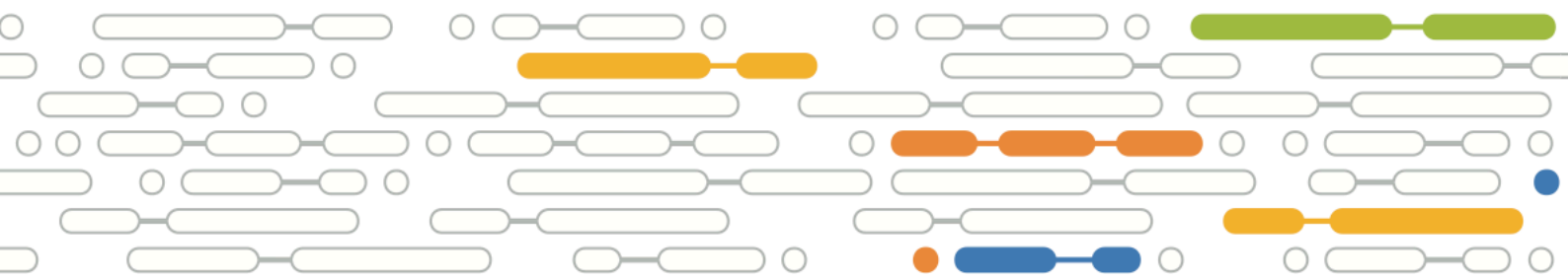
Priority 2: Fostering sustainable aquaculture activities, and processing and marketing of fisheries and aquaculture products, thus contributing to food security in the Union; and

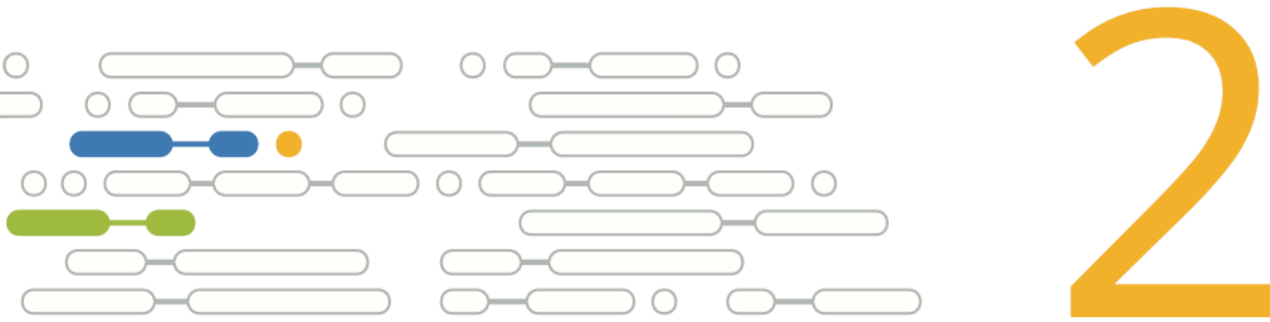
Priority 3: Technical Assistance².

EMFAF resources will target the needs of fishers and sector-related employees to ensure the provision of the necessary training. The Programme will also support interventions related to advisory services with the aim of improving the overall performance and competitiveness of operators and to promoting sustainable fisheries. Main initiatives will include the promotion of the Fisheries and Aquaculture sectors, modernisation through support for new technology and equipment as well as a strong focus on data collection and control, addressing marine litter, climate change and aquatic biodiversity impacts.

1 Regulation (EU) 2021/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and amending Regulation (EU) 2017/1004. In current prices and including Technical Assistance.

2 This Priority will finance the management and control of the programme (circa Eur 2 million) and hence is not included within this consultation document.





Development Challenges and Opportunities



2. Development Challenges and Opportunities

The Maltese Fisheries Sector

The Maltese fishery is a relatively small industry, primarily of an artisanal nature, frequently described as a multi-species/multi-gear fishery with most of the fishers switching from one gear to another throughout the year. This sector comprises predominantly small-scale coastal fishing (SSC) vessels (89.7% in 2019) which contribute to a quarter of the total catches³.

In 2019, the national commercial fishing fleet consisted of 912 vessels of which 386 (about 42%) were full-time and 526 (about 58%) were part-time vessels with a combined 6,600 gross tonnage (GT), engine power of 72, 900 kilowatt (kW) and an average age of 30 years⁴. The number of active fishing vessels decreased in 2019 by 6.3% to 682⁵. 171⁶ of these inactive vessels were part-time (mostly falling under small-scale coastal fleet segments).

Large-scale (LS) fishing vessels that were active during 2019 amounted to 64, equivalent to 7% of active Maltese fishing vessels⁷ and were mainly trawlers, long-liners, and netters. Non-commercial fishing effort is substantial with about 1,798 recreational vessels registered in 2019 amounting to about 66% of the total fleet.

The overall capacity of the Maltese fishing fleet shows a declining trend since 2008, with the number of vessels in 2019 being 14% less than the average capacity between 2008 and 2016. In terms of GT and kW, fishing capacity was 21% and 7% respectively lower for the same period⁸.

In 2019, the annual volume (kilograms) of fish landings stood at 2.4 million, a decrease of 11.2% over 2018. A similar decrease is also reflected in terms of annual wholesale value (€) of fish landings, which stood at €12.26 million, a decrease of 9% over the previous year⁹. Projections for 2020 show a similar trend with increased reduction in fish landings reflecting potential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis which is adding further pressures on the sustainability of the sector.

3 Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF). The 2020 Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet (STECF20-06). EUR 28359 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2020, ISBN 978-92-76-27164-2, doi:10.2760/500525, JRC123089

4 ibid

5 Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF). The 2020 Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet (STECF20-06).

6 Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights, Malta (2020) Annual Report on efforts to achieve a sustainable balance between fishing capacity and fishing opportunities for the year 2019 in accordance with Article 22 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy

7 ibid

8 ibid

9 Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF). The 2020 Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet (STECF20-06).

This scenario shows the increasing challenges faced by the fleet and the need to address the ageing fleet and continue to address the viability and vulnerabilities of the sector. The adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sector (and SSCF in particular) highlights the need for the Programme to cater for measures addressing unexpected environmental impacts such as temporary cessation measures¹⁰, but also the need of implementing measures that will further strengthen the resilience of the sector to assure its future sustainability.

Economic Performance

The total income from the fleet stood at about €14.5 million in 2018. Such figures represent a 33% increase over the previous year (€10.6 million in 2017)¹¹. A review of the sector's profitability illustrates a considerable improvement in 2018, over the previous two years, though this positive profitability is reflected solely in the large-scale fishery sector and the same cannot be deduced for the SSCF sector which is still limited¹².

On the basis of provisional data available, the sector's economic performance in 2019 is expected to decline over 2018, while the negative impact of COVID-19 is likely to be reflected also in 2020 and beyond. This may be attributed to decreased fish landings, interrupted exports, drops in fish consumption demand due to partial/full closure of restaurants and hotels resulting in a problem of excess supply and leading to price drops¹³.

Key Characteristics and Challenges

- Fisheries sector mostly composed of an ageing SSCF fleet
- Number of inactive vessels and potential negative economic performance as recorded between 2009-2016 may result in unbalanced fleet capacity, impacting the fishing community especially considering the COVID-19 implications in 2020 and beyond
- Limited registered female participation in fishing activities
- Five main species are mainly targeted due to market-driven preferences

The Maltese Aquaculture Sector

Since its introduction in the late 1980s, the aquaculture sector has grown and developed into a robust economic sector. It is entirely dependent on marine resources and focuses on two main categories: (1) tuna penning, which relies on captured wild fish and is referred to as capture based species (CBS), and (2) the farming of closed cycle species (CCS) such as sea bream, sea bass and meagre (cultured from eggs produced in hatcheries).

The establishment of an Aquaculture Zone in the South East of Malta saw the transformation of the operations management model from that of individual farms to one involving the potential of grouping several different operators. Existing cage sites in approved maritime spaces cater for the minimisation of user conflicts and are

10 Regulation (EU) 2021/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and amending Regulation (EU) 2017/1004

11 Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF). The 2020 Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet (STECF20-06).

12 Ibid

13 Ibid



acknowledged as sites suitable for aquaculture development¹⁴.

Economic performance

While 2018¹⁵ was a positive year in terms of total output (up by 18.9% over 2017 figures), during 2019 the combined output generated by the aquaculture fell by €69.3 million or 29.0% over that recorded in 2018. Overall, the sector registered a net operating loss of €29.7 million. Such decline is congruent with the decline of total sales of farmed fish both in terms of volume and value.

Similarly to the fisheries sector, COVID-19 impacts have negatively affected the sector's economic performance due to logistical issues, interrupted exports, drop in fish consumption demand attributed to partial/full closure of restaurants and hotels.

Key Characteristics & Challenges

- Limited species cultured with few farms specialising in closed-cycle species
- Established aquaculture enterprises
- Small workforce base with low female workforce participation
- Limited research and innovation targeting sustainability of the sector especially on climate change, environmental impacts and/or disease

Marine and Coastal Environment Impacts and Pressures

Malta's coastal and marine environment is of importance due to its rich biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides to support various coastal activities including recreation, tourism, shipping, and fisheries, amongst others. Fishing and aquaculture together are major users of the coastal and marine areas within the 25 nautical mile Fisheries Management Conservation Zone dedicated to sustainable fisheries¹⁶ and are also seen as the most adversely effected by environmental degradation of the marine waters¹⁷. In this regard, the estimated cost of environmental degradation is especially harmful to the fishing and aquaculture sector when observed by unit of economic activity since this may possibly result in reduced quantities of fish in sea waters and their suitability for human consumption¹⁸.

14 Aquaculture strategy for the Maltese islands. Towards sustainability 2014 – 2025. MSDEC, 2014. <https://eufunds.gov.mt/en/EU%20Funds%20Programmes/Agricultural%20Fisheries%20Fund/Documents/EMFF%202014-2020/aquaculture%20strategy%202014-25.pdf>

15 Aquaculture 2019 News Release 184/2020 (NSO, 2020) https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/Documents/2020/11/News2020_184.pdf

16 Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development (MEPA 2015), <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/mlt158315.pdf>

17 In view of their reliance on marine waters, being the only sectors with 100% usage of the marine environment.

18 Environment and Resources Authority "Update on Articles 8, 9, and 10 of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC) in Malta's Marine Waters". March 2020.

The main threats to Malta's marine environment^{19,20}, include:

- Extraction of living resources by the fisheries industry comprising both industrial (trawlers, long-liners and netters) and small-scale fishing vessels
- Marine aquaculture farms (including tuna penning)
- Transport related infrastructure comprising the construction / extension of quays, harbour wharves and jetties, slipways
- Anchoring and mooring by commercial vessels (bunkering, cargo handling, passenger handling, fisheries vessels) and shipping
- Endeavours to produce energy such as the installation of energy and communications cables
- Physical restructuring of the coastline or seabed - through land reclamation linked to coastal development projects, breakwaters and dredging of the seabed; depositing of dredged material; disposal of inert waste at sea
- Unsustainable waste practices
- Tourism and leisure comprising beach replenishment and scuttling of wrecks
- Recreational activities and other entertainment activities near the coast

Furthermore, predominant anthropogenic pressures that are impacting the marine environment include:

- Biological pressures - such as the input/spread of non-indigenous species and the extraction of, or mortality/injury to, wild species
- Physical pressures – namely loss/disturbance of the seabed and hydrological change
- The input of substances - nutrients/organic matter, synthetic substances/non-synthetic substances/radionuclides, hazardous substances in fish and seafood, litter, and energy

Fish stocks and maximum sustainable yield

In recent years, the European Union has undertaken various initiatives aimed at managing stocks, with endeavours such as quotas or catch limits (expressed in tonnes or numbers) that are set for most commercial fish stocks²¹. The impetus is to safeguard healthy commercial fish and shellfish populations and to ensure the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) for all stocks²², for the long-term prosperity of fishers and the health of the oceans and biodiversity.

It is important to maintain or reduce fish mortality at or under the Maximum Sustainable Yield levels to achieve a healthy population age and size distribution for fish stocks. Linked to the above is the necessity for a shift to a sustainable food system ensuring that the food chain has a neutral or positive environmental impact²³. Measures addressing the conservation of fish stocks, control and enforcement and the analysis and provision of scientific data are critical in this regard.

19 2nd Water Catchment Management plan for the Malta Water Catchment District 2015-2021 (EWA;2015) https://era.org.mt/en/Documents/2nd_Water_Catchment_Management_Plan-Malta_Water_in_Maltese_Islands.pdf

20 Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC) Malta's Programme of Measures (ERA;2017) https://era.org.mt/en/Documents/POMs_SummaryReport_Malta2017.pdf

21 European Commission. Fishing Quotas. Managing fisheries, https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/fishing_rules/tacs

22 European Environment Agency. Annual Indicator Report (AIR). Marine Fish Stocks (2016) , <https://www.eea.europa.eu/airs/2018/natural-capital/marine-fish-stocks>

23 A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system. European Commission (2020)



Nature Protection and Biodiversity

European seas and their natural capital need to be more sustainably managed²⁴. Europe's marine ecosystems continue to display symptoms of degradation and loss of resilience which will be exacerbated by the effects of climate change. Within this context the draft *National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan to 2030*²⁵ addresses the need to preserve biodiversity and ecosystem services. The strategy also considers that the benefits of biodiversity to the Maltese community are far reaching, including scenic, recreational, scientific, educational, cultural and socio-economic and provide the country with a degree of self-sufficiency reducing its reliance on the importation of foreign produce and resources.

Furthermore, Malta's National Strategy for Preventing and Mitigating the Impact of Invasive Alien Species (IAS)²⁶ in the Maltese Islands provides measures that address pathways of invasive species in the marine environment to mitigate the negative effects on Malta's marine habitats and ecosystems²⁷.

Climate change

Being a small island, Malta is prone to the effects of climate change, including sea level rise, coastal erosion, and extreme events such as storms and floods. The impacts of ongoing climate change on coastal and marine resources can lead to changes in the marine species composition that can disrupt ecosystems and their habitat²⁸. Other factors include consequences to natural and socio-economic amenities situated along low-lying parts of the Maltese coastline due to a rise in sea level as well as beach erosion that may affect berthing areas and fisheries²⁹.

Marine Litter

The presence of litter in the marine environment has increased drastically in the past years and poses a severe risk to marine ecosystems, to biodiversity and to human health. Furthermore, marine litter has a damaging effect on activities such as tourism, fisheries and shipping, harming the environment as well as generating adverse economic, health and aesthetic impacts. Malta's Single Use Plastic Strategy for 2020-2030³⁰ is based on the EU's strategy for plastics in a circular economy and highlights the detriment of single use plastics and marine litter for Malta.

24 European Environment Agency, Europe's seas: productive, but not healthy or clean 2015 <https://www.eea.europa.eu/media/newsreleases/europe2019s-seas-productive-but-not>

25 ERA,2020, National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan to 2030 (Public Consultation Document), https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/MECP/Pages/Consultations/IntentandObjectivesNationalBiodiversityStrategyandActionPlanto2030.aspx

26 National Strategy for Preventing and Mitigating the Impact of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in the Maltese Islands (ERA; 2018) https://era.org.mt/en/Documents/IAS-Strategy-Final_Public_Consultation.pdf

27 ibid

28 State of the Environment Report (ERA;2018) https://era.org.mt/en/Documents/Chapter3_ClimateChange-26 Nov 2018

29 Environmental Report Strategic Environmental Assessment of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) Operational Programme (December 2014) PWC. https://eufunds.gov.mt/en/EU%20Funds%20Programmes/Agricultural%20Fisheries%20Fund/Documents/EMFF%202014-2020/Final%20Environmental%20Report_.pdf

30 Single-Use Plastic Products Strategy for Malta 2020-2030 (ERA 2019, Draft Consultation Document), <https://era.org.mt/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/SUP-Strategy-Public-Consultation-Final.pdf>

Within this context, marine litter is increasingly becoming a threat to the marine environment that needs to be mitigated and addressed.

Research

Bearing in mind the everchanging context of the marine environment in the face of experienced and/or potential weaknesses and threats, the importance of research for better decision-making and the adoption of mitigating measures is even more crucial in this programming period. In this regard, this Programme comprises several actions that specifically address this need.

Key Challenges of the Marine and Coastal Environment

- Pressures on biodiversity resources and impacts resulting from user-conflict and competition for space/resources
- Climate change impacts
- Marine litter
- The need for an enhanced research base

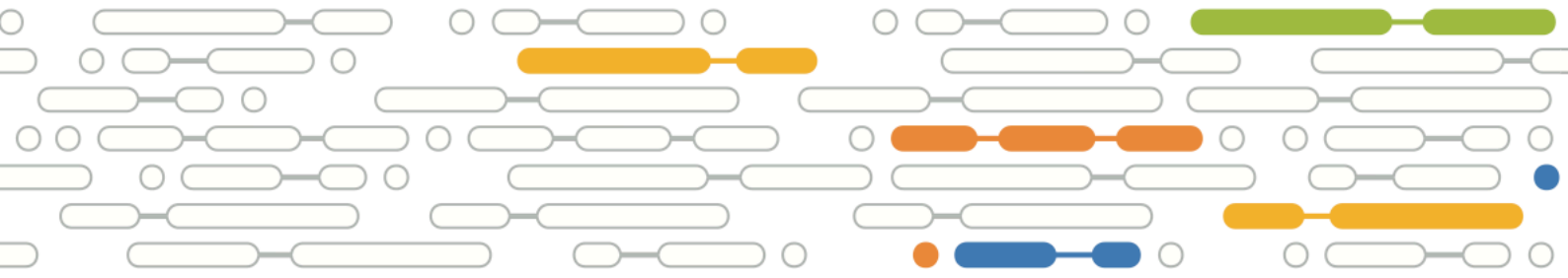
Additional Challenges

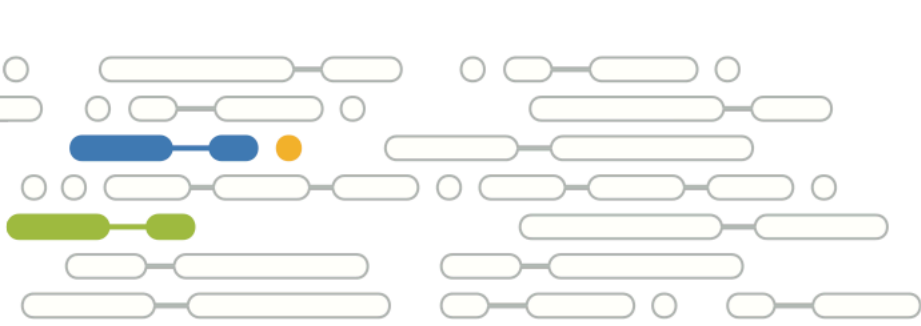
The demographics of the fisheries sector show an aging population and a shortage of young individuals joining the industry. Unless adequately addressed, such challenges could have important socio-economic implications and impacts.

A primary issue identified relates to the lack of attractiveness of the sector and the failure to entice new young individuals to undertake a fishing (or related) profession. The hardships attached to being employed in this industry seem to be limiting factors and are not perceived to be offset by an adequate return and better job opportunities in other sectors. Measures earmarked to address issues of economic performance in the sector are important, especially for small-scale fishing.









3

Strategy and complementarity



3. Strategy and complementarity

The Programme will focus on enhanced sustainable management of the Maltese fisheries and aquaculture sectors by focussing on two (2) thematic priorities where resources shall be focused³¹. These Priorities have a total budget (EU+MT share) of some EUR 29 million and are:

- Priority 1: Fostering sustainable fisheries and the restoration and conservation of aquatic biological resources; and
- Priority 2: Fostering sustainable aquaculture activities, and processing and marketing of fisheries and aquaculture products, thus contributing to food security in the Union.

Investments supported under EMFAF shall particularly aim to foster sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, contribute to food security, restore and protect marine biodiversity whilst enabling the sustainable growth of the blue economy.

Development needs of Gozo

Building on previous programming periods, initiatives foreseen under this programme will target Gozo in a horizontal manner across the different priorities, although complementary targeted interventions are not excluded.

Complementarity with Funds and Instruments

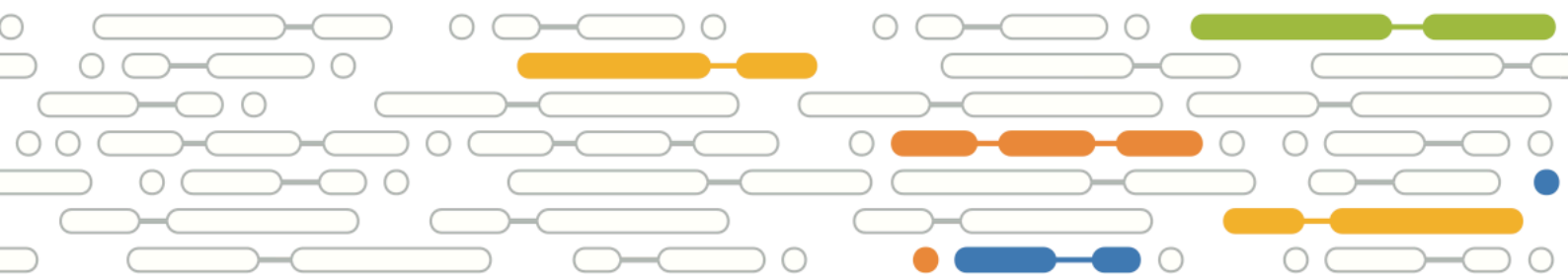
EMFAF resources will complement other EU Funds and programmes by acting as the main fund targeting the fisheries and aquaculture sectors and the respective target groups directly. EMFAF measures will complement ERDF, CF and JTF interventions, primarily in relation to the decarbonisation of ports, investments in TEN-T seaports and support for biodiversity and greening. Synergies will also be ensured with the ESF+ Programme which provides overarching training and educational support. Furthermore, EMFAF support may also complement cross-border and transnational programmes in areas related to the green transition and risk management, including in coastal areas.

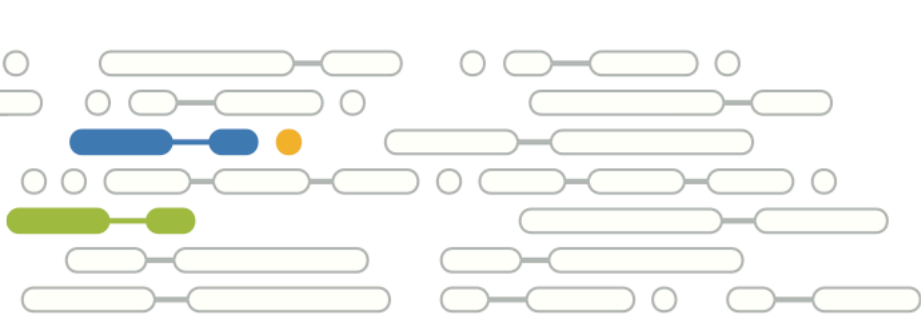
EMFAF and the Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan (CAP SP) will jointly aim to contribute towards the ambitions of the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy³² and the Biodiversity Strategy³³ including by fostering sustainable practices and reducing the reliance on chemicals and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in food production. They will also contribute to improved dietary consumption, greater consumer awareness and increasing environmental and climate ambition.

³¹ These thematic priorities exclude Technical Assistance.

³² A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system. European Commission (2020)

³³ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 Bringing nature back into our lives. COM/2020/380 final





4

Priority Areas



4. Priority Areas

4.1 Priority 1: Fostering sustainable fisheries and the conservation of aquatic biological resources

4.1.1 Strengthening economic, social, and environmentally sustainable fishing activities

This Programme aims to incorporate interventions that ensure the fisheries sector is economically viable and resilient to external shocks and to competition from third countries. In this regard, safeguarding the seas and longevity of the sector through sustainable activities are overarching principles of this Programme. The efficient and sustainable use of resources will be key to securing economic growth in the future, creating economic opportunities, boosting competitiveness and providing the impetus for the green economy.

Assuring the wellbeing of operators in the sector is also an important factor. Consultations undertaken in drafting the Programme have shown that further investment in port/landing infrastructure to improve efficiency, health and safety as well as product quality is required. Such interventions will add value to the fishers' livelihood and contribute towards enhancing the sustainability of the sector. A focus on modernisation, innovation and onboard investments as well as the promotion of skills, knowledge, innovation and capacity building, also targeting health and safety and working conditions, is required especially for SSCF. Business development and innovation are other areas that are closely linked to fishers' income and quality of life and which will be supported through the Programme.

Linked to the above is the need for improved business and operational planning, all to the benefit of the profitability and sustainability of the sector. In this respect, such interventions, as are those related to advisory services for example, aim to improve the overall performance and competitiveness of operators whilst promoting sustainable fisheries.

The related types of actions

The Programme will seek to strengthen fishing activities from an economic, social and environmentally sustainable perspective considering the needs and specificities of the sector and seeking to prioritise support for small-scale coastal fishing (SSCF), which in 2019 constituted 89.7% of the Maltese fleet³⁴.

Actions targeting on board fishing vessels investment addressing:

- a) the improvement of health, safety and working conditions beyond minimum requirements;
- b) the improvement of cold-chain management and onboard handling/storage beyond minimum requirements to enhance the quality of fishery products; and
- c) the increase of fishing vessels' energy efficiency through investments in equipment or on board when this does not increase the capacity of a fishing vessel or its ability to find fish.

³⁴ Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF): The 2020 Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet (STECF 20-06).

Interventions will be directed at fleet modernisation, innovation and the use-of latest equipment/ technology where possible to target increased efficiency and/or product quality, and in so doing add value across the value chain whilst enhancing sustainability of the sector. These actions may be complemented with the provision of advisory services to ensure feasibility of the intervention. Actions seeking to address the improvement of cold-chain management and onboard handling/storage beyond minimum requirements to enhance the quality of fishery products, may also be further complemented by marketing activities under Priority 2 of the Programme.

Actions addressing the promotion of skills, knowledge, innovation, and capacity building

An important aspect relates to capacity building to ensure a sustainable and competitive artisanal fishing sector. Actions may target the provision of wider knowledge in various fields including:

- a) the prevention of accidents, especially at sea and in harbour to alleviate local fishers' safety and the costs caused by accidents;
- b) food handling and on-board hygiene;
- c) minimising damage to the marine environment by reducing incidental catches through the promotion of selective gear;
- d) entrepreneurship; and
- e) innovative solutions and technology developments.

Areas of focus include the provision of training and lifelong learning to promote human capital, job creation and diversification of activities, initiatives that specifically target new entrants and awareness raising campaigns.

Other actions that may be supported include:

- a) feasibility studies and advisory services of projects potentially eligible for support under this Programme;
- b) the provision of professional advice on environmental sustainability, with a focus on limiting and where possible eliminating the negative impact of fishing activities on marine, terrestrial, and freshwater ecosystems; and
- c) the provision of professional advice on business planning and marketing strategies.

Diversification of fishing activities

The Programme will also focus on supporting the diversification of fishing activities to ensure the sustainable development of the sector. Interventions aimed at diversification of activities in the broader sustainable blue economy shall target the three pillars that form an integral part of Malta's Sustainable Development Vision for 2050.

Actions will also be targeted at the development of complementary activities, which may include investments on board, angling tourism, environmental services related to fishing and educational activities concerning fishing, vertical integration through investments in the food and catering sector, amongst others. These actions will be further supported by the provision of professional advice and relevant advisory services.



Actions aimed at improving and expanding key port/landing infrastructure

Complementing the interventions undertaken during previous programming periods, the Programme will support investments in port/landing infrastructure as the interface between the harvesting of fish and its consumption.

Actions will thus target: good and fair access to landing sites ensuring they are adequately equipped to facilitate small-scale fishing activities including, amongst others, fully serviced docking areas, moorings, refrigerated warehousing, drinking water service, ice machines, etc. These actions will aim to improve the infrastructure of fishing ports, auctions halls, landing sites and shelters to increase the quality, control and traceability of the products landed, energy efficiency, as well as contribute to environmental protection and improve safety and working conditions.

Investments in port infrastructure aimed at adapting to climate change, including the sustainability of fisheries, marine and coastal observation systems, as well as risk prevention (including risk management and disaster resilience) targeting health and safety through disaster relief infrastructure may also be considered.

Actions aimed at improving the research base of the local fisheries sector with the aim of increasing sustainability and resilience

Enhancing marine knowledge through research is imperative to ensure the sustainability of the fisheries sector. This is important given the needs and characteristics of the sector (including those related to SSCF) and considering the environmental related pressures and climate change impacts. The Programme thus aims to enhance Malta's research base and knowledge for better decision-making and planning in the field.

4.1.2 Promoting the adjustment of fishing capacity to fishing opportunities in cases of permanent cessation and contributing to a fair standard of living in cases of temporary cessation of fishing activities

The sustainable development of small-scale fisheries and coastal communities depends on the region's ability to manage fish stocks through multiannual fisheries plans, technical measures, closing areas and other specific conservation measures. Imbalances in fleet segments may justify temporary cessation/conservation measures in certain circumstances³⁵ with the aim of addressing the adjustment and management of fishing capacity.

The related types of actions

Temporary cessation aimed at contributing towards the sustainability of the sector

The Programme shall support actions for temporary cessation of fishing activities where, based on scientific advice, a reduction of fishing effort is needed. This will seek to promote a fair standard of living in cases where temporary cessation is required. Measures for the conservation and sustainable exploitation of marine biological resources, shall be based on the measures identified below, or equivalent conservation measures adopted by regional fisheries management organisations, where applicable to the Union. These may target amongst others:

³⁵ on the basis of EMFAF Article 21.

- Multiannual plans containing conservation measures to restore and maintain fish stocks above levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield;
- Targets for the conservation and sustainable exploitation of stocks and related measures to minimise the impact of fishing on the marine environment; and
- Measures to adapt the fishing capacity of fishing vessels to available fishing opportunities.

Other temporary cessation actions may relate to technical measures regarding the characteristics of fishing gears and specifications on the construction of fishing gear including modifications, limitations, or prohibitions on the use of certain fishing gears, and on fishing activities, in certain areas or periods. Additional actions may relate to Commission measures³⁶ to be implemented in the case of serious threat to marine biological resources and/or measures addressing natural disasters, environmental incidents, or health crises, as formally recognised by Maltese competent authorities.

Actions here will aim to contribute towards ensuring the protection of food systems, food security and supply of affordable fish resources thus ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth to boost the economy, improve people's health and quality of life, protection, and conservation of aquatic biodiversity.

These actions will be complemented by other actions implemented under this Programme including actions supporting control and enforcement, collection, management, use and processing of data in the fisheries sector, research and innovation programmes, and protection and restoration of aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems³⁷.

National schemes targeting cessation as identified, also through the adopted Management Plans and/or the Action Plan forming part of Annual Fleet Capacity Report, will also complement interventions supported under the Programme. In this regard, the appropriate mechanisms will be adopted to avoid the risk of overcompensation.

The main target groups

The main target groups to be supported through this action are:

- Fishers (Final Beneficiaries); and
- Public authorities/ entities.

Investments shall focus on targeting the compensation of fishers impacted by temporary cessation measures. The DFA, as the responsible authority for fisheries and aquaculture, and tasked with data collection, control and enforcement, will ensure that actions aimed at the adjustment and management of fishing capacity address the needs identified whilst also ensuring effectiveness of implemented actions.

36 Article 12 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy.

37 Article 22 of the EMFAF Regulation deals with Control and Enforcement, Article 23 relates to Data Collection, and Article 25 addresses the protection and restoration of aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems.



4.1.3 Fostering efficient fisheries control and enforcement, including fighting against IUU fishing, as well as reliable data for knowledge-based decision-making

Fostering efficient fisheries control and enforcement, as well as reliable data for knowledge-based decision making and targeting the identified need for increased compliance with data collection, traceability, monitoring, control, and surveillance requirements are key to ensure sustainability of the sector.

The related types of actions

This Programme acknowledges the difficulties faced by the sector in relation to meeting EU requirements regarding, data collection, traceability and monitoring, control and surveillances measures.

Control and enforcement:

Actions shall target interventions aiming to further develop and enhance the implementation of the Union fisheries control and enforcement system. Control and enforcement actions aim to strengthen international ocean governance, and sustainable seas and oceans.

Interventions may include:

- a) Actions to improve the means of control and enforcement of the Competent Authority through investments in equipment and facilities and investments for the development and implementation of a Union fisheries control system, including:
 - i) the purchase, installation and development of technology, including computer hardware and software, vessel detection systems (VDS), closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems and IT networks enabling the gathering, administration, validation, analysis and exchange of data related to fisheries;
 - ii) the modernisation and purchase of patrol vessels, aircrafts, and helicopters, if they are used for fisheries control for at least 60% of the total period of use per year; and
 - iii) the development of innovative control and monitoring systems and the implementation of pilot projects related to fisheries control, including fish DNA analysis or the development of websites related to control.
- b) Actions to improve the means of control and enforcement of the Competent Authority through investments in equipment on board fishing vessels for the development and implementation of a Union fisheries control system, including:
 - i) the purchase and installation on vessels of the components for compulsory vessel tracking and electronic reporting systems (ERS) and automatic identification systems (AIS) for control purposes, including the necessary components for compulsory remote electronic monitoring systems used for controlling the implementation of the landing obligation;
 - ii) the development, purchase, and installation of the components, including computer hardware and software, which are necessary to ensure the traceability of fishery and aquaculture products;

and

- iii) the purchase and installation on vessels of devices for compulsory continuous measurement and recording of propulsive engine power.
- c) Actions to enhance the effectiveness of the Control and Enforcement Competent Authority including:
- i) training and/or exchange programmes, including with other Member States, of personnel responsible for the monitoring, control, and surveillance of fisheries activities;
 - ii) operational costs incurred in carrying out more stringent control for stocks subject to specific control and inspection programmes subject to control coordination; and
 - iii) programmes linked to the implementation of an action plan, including any operational costs incurred.

Collection, management, and processing of data for fisheries and aquaculture management and scientific purposes

Actions shall address the collection, management and use of data for fisheries and aquaculture management and scientific purposes. Interventions shall thus be aimed at collecting and processing data in line with the Multiannual Union Programme for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors (EU-MAP), to contribute to the best available scientific advice and provide crucial information for related studies and evaluations which serve to increase knowledge on the state of the marine environment. Actions may include, amongst others:

- a) the collection, management and use of data for the purpose of scientific analysis and implementation of the CFP;
- b) national, transnational, and subnational multiannual sampling programmes, if these relate to stocks covered by the CFP;
- c) at-sea monitoring of commercial and recreational fisheries, including monitoring of by-catch of marine organisms such as marine mammals and birds (as applicable);
- d) research surveys at sea;
- e) the participation of representatives of Member States and regional authorities in regional coordination meetings, meetings of regional fisheries management organisations of which the Union is a contracting party or an observer, or meetings of international bodies responsible for providing scientific advice; and
- f) the improvement of data collection and data management systems and the implementation of pilot studies to improve existing data collection and data management systems.



The main target groups

The main target groups to be supported through these actions are:

- Public authorities/ entities;
- Fishers and aquaculture operators; and
- Entities responsible for control & enforcement.

4.1.4 Contributing to the protection and restoration of aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems

The continued conservation of biodiversity and ecologically dependent ecosystems and, wherever possible, the restoration of habitats to a favourable conservation status is a core pillar in the sustainable use and management of land and sea resources. In line with the draft Long-Term Waste Management Plan 2021-2030³⁸ waste recovery is being tackled through interventions that target the collection of ghost gears and plastic litter at seas.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the need for the Programme to be flexible where possible. In this regard, the Programme also aims to target Malta's particular vulnerabilities related to small island member states which could have devastating effects on the industry (such as threats from oil spills) and which, should the need arise, would have to be addressed through appropriate crisis action supported by the Programme.

The acquisition of marine knowledge, in line with the EU's Biodiversity Strategy³⁹ that aims to ensure that Europe's biodiversity will be on the path to recovery by 2030, is also necessary. Furthermore, efforts targeting the EU Blue Economy⁴⁰ highlight the fact that while Europe has made strides on ocean forecasting related to climate to understand part of the oceans' behaviour, there are still knowledge gaps with regards to abundance, distribution and trends of marine life and habitats. Filling these gaps is essential for policy making together with corresponding actions that address the importance of enhancing marine knowledge and spatial planning.

The Programme will thus support initiatives to enhance the environmental and socio-economic research base of fisheries to address resilience and sustainability. Similar and complementing endeavours will also be directed towards conservation and restoration to avoid the deterioration of the priority habitat, considering the importance of the habitat and related ecosystems, for the maintenance or restoration of habitat to a favourable conservation status as defined by the Habitat's Directive. Likewise monitoring and management measures addressing opportunities and pressures on the marine environment are encouraged.

This investment will take into account the needs identified for the sector particularly to address the needs of SSCF and to promote low-impact, climate resilient and low-carbon fishing practices, that minimise damage to the marine environment, as well as the involvement of various stakeholders in the participatory management of the maritime space including Marine Protected Areas and Natura 2000 areas.

38 ERA, 2020. Malta's Waste Management Plan 2021-2030 (Consultation Document, December 2020) <https://environment.gov.mt/en/Documents/ministerialConsultations/longTermWasteManagementPlan2021-2030.pdf>.

39 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 Bringing nature back into our lives. COM/2020/380 final <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1590574123338&uri=CELEX:52020DC0380>

40 European Commission, 2021. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a new approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU Transforming the EU's Blue Economy for a Sustainable Future (COM/2021/240 final) <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2021:240:FIN>

The identified types of actions are also in line with those recommended in the EC's Sea Basin Analysis (2020) to address identified challenges⁴¹ and the actions identified in the Ministerial Declaration on a Regional Plan of Action for Small-scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea⁴².

Actions Addressing Marine Litter and Achieving Good Environmental Status

The Programme will support interventions that protect and restore aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems through the provision of support to fishers for the collection of lost fishing gears and marine litter from the sea. Other actions that will be supported relate to port or infrastructure related amenities for adequate marine litter reception. The primary focus relates to the need to tackle the issue of marine litter through the direct involvement of fishers and key stakeholders taking into account Malta's draft Single Use Plastic Strategy for 2020-2030⁴³ and the EU's Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy⁴⁴.

Interventions in this area may comprise:

- a) Actions for compensation schemes to fishers to collect lost fishing gear and other marine litter including the passive collection of marine litter from the sea;
- b) Actions targeting investments in ports or other infrastructure to provide adequate reception facilities for lost fishing gears and marine litter collected from the sea; and
- c) Actions to achieve or maintain a good environmental status in the marine environment taking into account MSFD measures identified by ERA⁴⁵ and/or any measures for the achievement of GES including Programmes of Measures as identified in related documentation and programmes.

Actions addressing the conservation and restoration of Natura 2000 areas & Marine Protected Areas

The Programme aims to adopt an inclusive approach that incorporates the involvement of various stakeholders (comprising fishers and SSFC) in the management of the marine space, including Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and Natura 2000 areas. In line with the EMFAF Regulation, actions that will be supported relate to:

- a) the implementation of marine protection measures including the management, restoration and monitoring of marine protected areas; and
- b) the management, restoration, surveillance and monitoring of Natura 2000 areas in relation to the prioritised action frameworks.

41 The identified challenges include: Challenge 1- Ensuring a sustainable management of natural resources, Challenge 3- Ensuring a balanced socio-economic outlook for the fisheries sector and strengthening resilience and Challenge 6 -Enabling climate change adaptation and mitigation.

42 Ministerial Declaration on a Regional Plan of Action for Small-scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (2018, Malta).

43 Single-Use Plastic Products Strategy for Malta 2020-2030 (ERA 2019), Retrieved from <https://era.org.mt/en/Pages/Single-Use-Plastic-Products-Strategy-for-Malta-2020-2030.aspx>

44 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions A European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy. COM/2018/028 final <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1516265440535&uri=COM:2018:28:FIN>

45 Environment and Resources Authority "Update on Articles 8, 9, and 10 of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC) in Malta's Marine Waters", March 2020.



Actions shall be based on a collaborative approach and take advantage of knowledge and experience gained from fishers/aquaculture operators and key stakeholders/actors in the marine environment including NGOs and research institutions. This approach will help to preserve, transfer and enhance knowledge gain, increase awareness of the needs and challenges and apply appropriate protection and restoration measure through increased social dialogue, collaboration and ownership thus enhancing sustainability on a socio-economic and environmental level.

In this respect it is envisaged that these actions will contribute towards the EU nature restoration targets⁴⁶ including the EU Biodiversity Strategy⁴⁷ targets for the protection of 30% of the sea and to the 10% strict protection of identified marine protected areas.

The main target groups

The main target groups that may be supported through these actions are:

- Public authorities/entities;
- Fishers including fishing cooperatives and associations;
- Non-Government Organisations (NGO's) involved in marine/fisheries/nature protection; and
- Entities and research institutions involved in research/ studies/ assessments in the marine environment and similar.

4.1.a Indicative Financial Allocation

The indicative total funding for this Priority amounts to € 25 million.

⁴⁶ As at time of reporting, EU nature restoration targets were still to be published/adopted. Source: European Commission Website, https://ec.europa.eu/environment/strategy/biodiversity-strategy-2030/eu-nature-restoration-targets_en#:~:text=The%20European%20Commission%20will%20put,the%20impacts%20of%20natural%20disasters

⁴⁷ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 Bringing nature back into our lives. COM/2020/380 final <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1590574123338&uri=CELEX:52020DC0380>

4.2. Priority 2: Fostering sustainable aquaculture activities and processing and marketing of fisheries and aquaculture products

4.2.1. Promoting sustainable aquaculture activities, especially strengthening the competitiveness of aquaculture production while ensuring that the activities are environmentally sustainable in the long term

Interventions to be implemented under Priority 2 shall follow the general and strategic objectives of the Open Method for Coordination defined in the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation⁴⁸ taking into consideration *Challenge 4- Promoting a sustainable and profitable aquaculture* and related EMFF actions identified in the EC's Sea Basin Analysis (2020). In this regard, taking also into account the needs identified in Section 2 of this document, actions shall aim to enhance sustainability, food security, growth, employment and improve the competitiveness of the aquaculture industry.

The related types of actions

The Programme's strategic direction will focus on the sustainability of the sector by reducing the adverse environmental impact of aquaculture on the marine environment whilst also decreasing the environmental footprint of aquaculture systems.

Ensuring the environmental sustainability of the aquaculture industry

Interventions will build on the objectives of Malta's *Aquaculture Strategy for the Maltese Islands 2014-2025*⁴⁹ and Malta's draft *Multannual National Plan for the Development of Sustainable Aquaculture 2021-2030*⁵⁰ which highlight the need for sustainability by improving environmental management and reducing environmental damage leading to increased quality for the sector. In this respect, there is also the need to maximise the potential of coastal space, which is limited, resulting in intense competition for its use.

Furthermore, improving the public's poor perception and social acceptance of the aquaculture sector is needed to ensure the sustainability of the industry in the years to come. Such efforts will also improve the image of aquaculture, ensure a better marine environment and consolidate its place in maritime growth planning, possibly through using Marine Spatial Planning as a tool. The importance of strengthening the resilience of aquaculture to climate change and extreme weather events is also acknowledged under this Priority. Interventions in this respect may *inter alia* focus on:

- a) Assessments for the identification and mapping of the most suitable areas for developing aquaculture;
- b) Research to assess and monitor the state and/or trends of farmed aquatic genetic resources and their wild relatives in Malta;

48 Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC.

49 Ministry for Sustainable Development, Environment and Climate Change. Aquaculture strategy for the Maltese islands. Towards sustainability 2014 - 2025. <https://eufunds.gov.mt/en/EU%20Funds%20Programmes/Agricultural%20Fisheries%20Fund/Documents/EMFF%202014-2020/aquaculture%20strategy%202014-25.pdf>

50 Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Animal Rights, Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (2021). Draft Malta Multiannual National Plan for the Development of Sustainable Aquaculture 2021-2030.



- c) Actions related to climate change impacts, adaptation, risk prevention and resilience; and
- d) Actions aimed at valorising aquaculture by further minimising its carbon footprint and/or improving its environmental performance. This may include research activities targeting integrated multi-trophic aquaculture (IMTA) and effluent treatment.

Increasing resilience and competitiveness of the sector through enhanced investment including research and innovation

The Programme may facilitate sector support for investment in aquaculture including the introduction of new-culture species to decrease reliance on a limited number of species, both for food and non-food, and enable innovative systems that allow the sector to remain sustainable, proactive and competitive. This is in line with the *Aquaculture Strategy for the Maltese Islands 2014-2025*⁵¹ and will also build on Malta's draft *Multiannual National Plan for the Development of Sustainable Aquaculture 2021-2030*⁵². Interventions may thus include:

- a) Research and/or development on the diversification of aquaculture production and species cultured including algae species;
- b) Modernisation in aquaculture, including in the improvement in health and safety conditions of aquaculture workers and aquaculture research;
- c) Research and/or innovation initiatives on new or substantially improved products or, new or improved processes, or new or improved management and organisation systems;
- d) Activities related to reduced dependence on fish meal and oil, sustainable use of resources in aquaculture and improving animal welfare; and
- e) Technical or economic feasibility studies of innovative products or processes.

Actions may also support further research and development for sustainability and the development of innovative and environmentally friendly intensive and integrated aquaculture systems, including recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS) for niche high value species with local demand such as sea bass, sea bream, meagre and amberjack.

These actions also aim to contribute to the EU's Farm-to-Fork Strategy⁵³ targets for increased targeted support for algae aquaculture and to the 50% EU target for the reduction in sales of antimicrobials used for farmed animals and aquaculture.

51 Ministry for Sustainable Development, Environment and Climate Change. Aquaculture strategy for the Maltese islands. Towards sustainability 2014 - 2025.

52 Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Animal Rights, Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (2021). Draft Malta Multiannual National Plan for the Development of Sustainable Aquaculture 2021-2030.

53 European Commission (2020). Farm to Fork Strategy. For a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system.

Knowledge and Exchange

The Programme will allow for further development of knowledge to ensure the availability of skilled labour in the aquaculture sector through training and knowledge transfer in line with the *Aquaculture Strategy for the Maltese Islands 2014-2025*⁵⁴ and *Malta's draft Multiannual National Plan for the Development of Sustainable Aquaculture 2021-2030*⁵⁵. In view of this, interventions will support the acquisition of skills and the promotion of human capital and social dialogue in the aquaculture sector through:

- a) Support for professional training and lifelong learning with potential areas of focus relating to innovative research and diversification; and/or
- b) Social dialogue, networks, exchange of experiences and best practices among aquaculture enterprises, responsible authorities, professional/research organisations and other key stakeholders with the aim of enhancing sustainability of the sector through knowledge transfer and collective collaboration.

These actions follow the strategic approach reflected in the EU's Strategic Guidelines for Aquaculture⁵⁶ including actions reflected in Malta's Aquaculture Strategy and *Malta's draft Multiannual National Plan for the Development of Sustainable Aquaculture 2021-2030*⁵⁷ as well as the guiding principles in the European Green Deal⁵⁸, the EU's Farm-to-Fork Strategy⁵⁹ and the EU's Bioeconomy Strategy⁶⁰.

The main target groups

The main target group to be supported through these actions are:

- Public authorities/ entities.

4.2.2. Promoting marketing, quality and value added of fisheries and aquaculture products, as well as processing of these products.

Interventions shall aim to target the Open Method for Coordination defined in the Common Fisheries Policy⁶¹, where applicable. In this regard, actions shall aim to enhance the competitiveness of the aquaculture industry, its sustainability, growth and employment through marketing actions which actions are also applicable for the fisheries sector thus also addressing its sustainability and competitiveness.

54 Ministry for Sustainable Development, Environment and Climate Change. Aquaculture strategy for the Maltese islands. Towards sustainability 2014 - 2025.

55 Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Animal Rights, Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (2021). Draft Malta Multiannual National Plan for the Development of Sustainable Aquaculture 2021-2030

56 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030 [COM/2021/236 final] <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2021:236:FIN>

57 Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Animal Rights, Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (2021). Draft Malta Multiannual National Plan for the Development of Sustainable Aquaculture 2021-2030

58 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. The European Green Deal [COM/2019/640 final]

59 European Commission (2020). Farm to Fork Strategy. For a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system.

60 European Commission (2018). A sustainable bioeconomy for Europe: strengthening the connection between economy, society and the environment Updated Bioeconomy Strategy

61 Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC

In addition, these actions will also complement interventions implemented under Priority 2 of the Programme relating to the promotion of sustainable aquaculture activities and actions identified in the EU's Strategic Guidelines on Aquaculture on Communication *on EU aquaculture to consumers and citizens*. These actions take into consideration the principles of the European Green Deal, EU's Farm-to-Fork Strategy and EU's Bioeconomy Strategy on the efficient use of resources, safeguarding of marine ecosystems and the reduction of the carbon footprint.

The related types of actions

Building on previous operations undertaken through the EFF 2007-2013 and the EMFF 2014-2020 Operational Programmes, the Programme seeks to undertake interventions that increase consumer awareness of local fish species, their diversity and seasonality thereby shifting local consumer purchases of fish species through increased knowledge awareness.

Marketing Measures & Awareness-Raising Campaigns

These actions shall primarily be directed at marketing strategies to promote underutilised species in both the fisheries and aquaculture sectors and/or the promotion of new/improved products or processes. In this respect, interventions that will be supported will include promotional and awareness-raising campaigns targeting national communication to raise public awareness of:

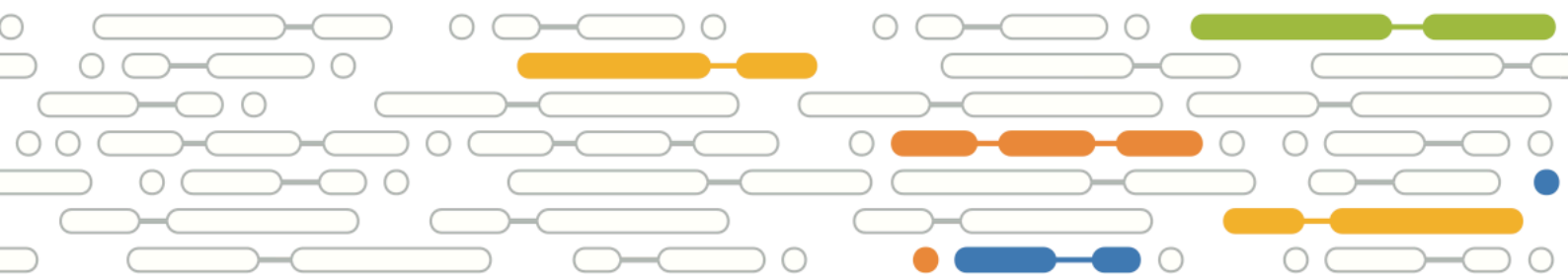
- a) sustainable fishery and aquaculture products: efforts shall be primarily directed at promoting undervalued and underutilised species and increasing public knowledge of local species including farmed species and related health benefits including their low-carbon footprint;
- b) fishery and aquaculture products obtained using methods with low impact on the environment (through selective fishing gear or improved/new processing methods) or organic aquaculture products; and
- c) new aquaculture products with marketing potential.

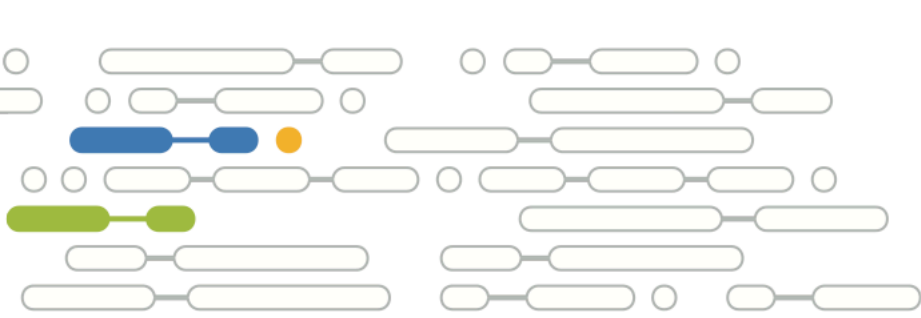
The main target groups

- General public
- Public authorities/ entities;
- Fishers; and
- Aquaculture enterprises, aquaculture employees.

4.2.a Indicative Financial Allocation

The indicative total funding for this Priority amounts to €4 million.





5

Partnership

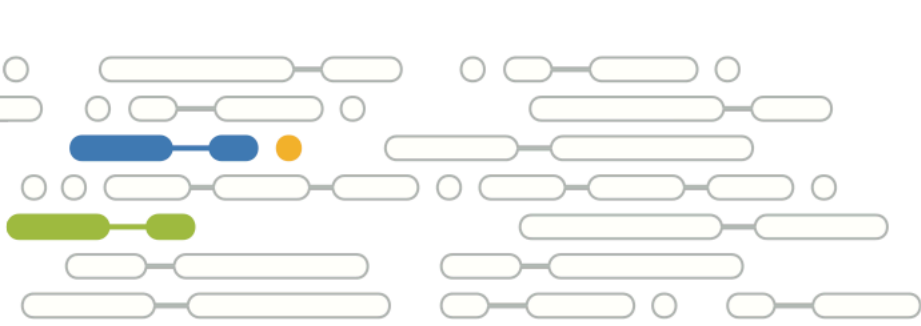


5. Partnership

Malta is committed to ensuring that the principles of partnership and multi-level governance are adhered to. In this regard, various stakeholders were involved in the consultation process leading to the drafting of this consultation document.

A series of bilateral consultative meetings were held primarily between 2019-2020 which included key stakeholders, such as Government entities and other public authorities, economic and social partners such as cooperatives of fishers and aquaculture association and environmental partners, amongst others. Experts presented participants with their research findings on the development challenges and investment needs and a technical overview on funding and the resulting proposed regulatory framework. This was followed by discussions and other follow-up engagements as necessary with a view to solicit feedback, insights and opinions of participants on the different themes. The outcome of these meetings was taken into consideration in the drafting of the EMFAF public consultation document.





6

Next Steps



6. Next Steps

This document presents the basis on which the EMFAF Programme 2021-2027 will be drafted and forms part of the programming process of the European Union funding that Malta will be investing within the coming years.

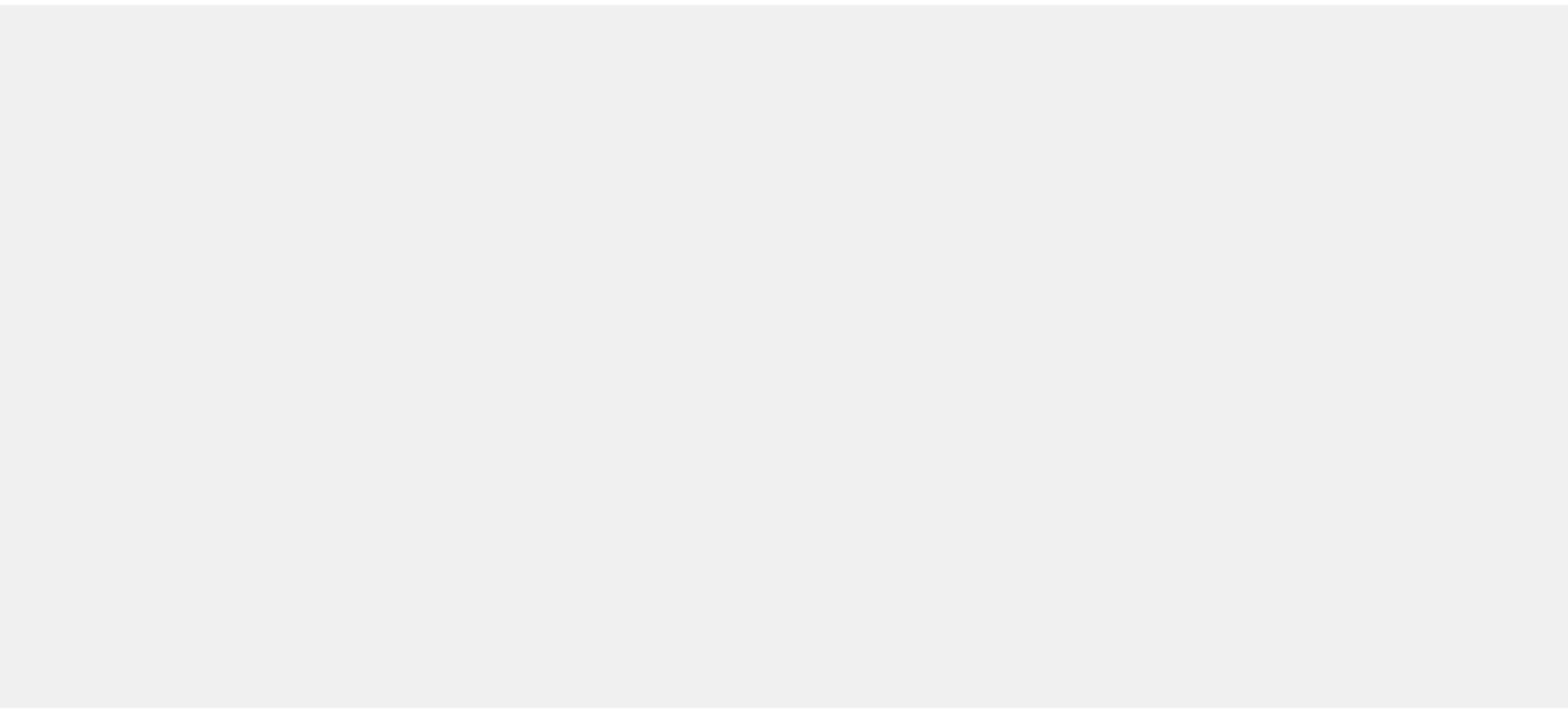
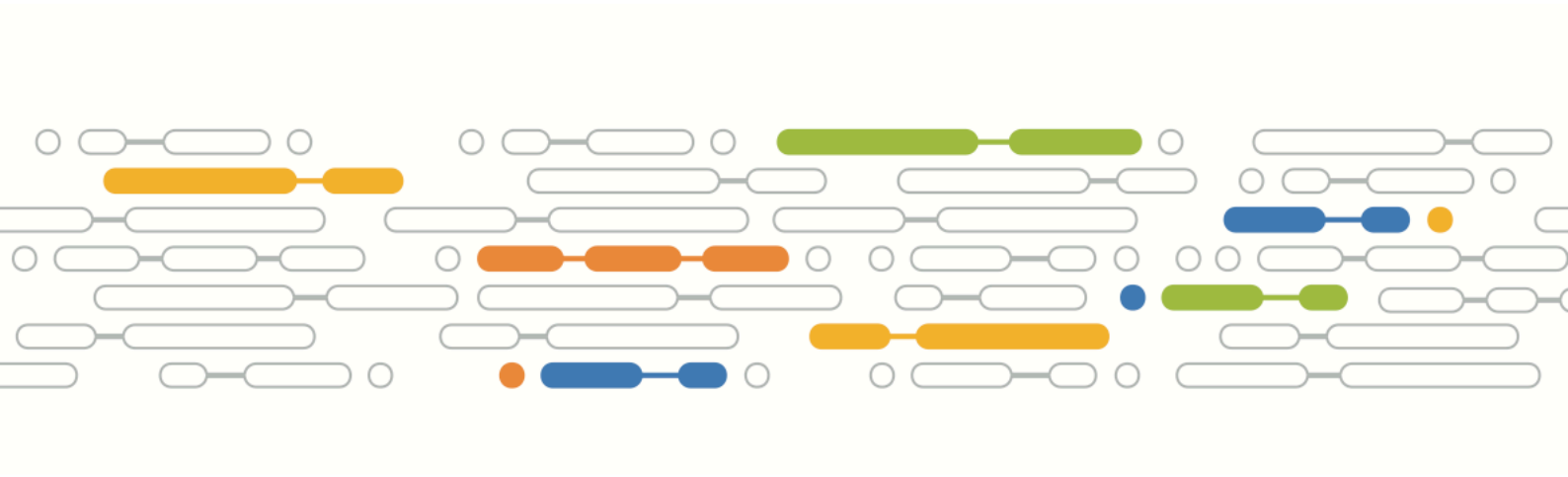
The identified investments will be directed towards priority measures with the objective to address the country's development needs and challenges within the context of the EMFAF regulation. The investments are also in line with key areas outlined in the European Green Deal amongst others. Interventions are aimed to support the socio-economic and environmental sustainability of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors through support for investment as well as an enhanced focus on research for better decision-making and improved marine knowledge, control and enforcement, as well as the protection and restoration of the marine environment, amongst others.

As part of the partnership principle and multi-level governance, all stakeholders and the general public are encouraged to participate in this consultation process.

Interested parties are invited to put forward their views, suggestions and comments in reaction to this document by **Friday, 22 October 2021**.

Additional information may be viewed on www.eufunds.gov.mt

Written feedback may be submitted through Email on: consultationemfaf@gov.mt or by post addressed to the Director General, Strategy and Implementation Division, EU Funds Section, 32, House of Catalunya, Marsamxett Road, Valletta, VLT 1850.



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