



**NWWAC feedback**  
**on the call for evidence for the initiative**  
**“Energy transition of EU fisheries and aquaculture sector”**

**01 December 2022**

The North Western Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC) acknowledges the Commission’s launch of the call for evidence for the initiative “Energy transition of EU fisheries and aquaculture sector” on 07 November 2022. The initiative aims to tackle the insufficient, fragmented and uncoordinated efforts regarding the acceleration of and support for the energy transition in the EU’s fisheries and aquaculture sector. Financial, technical, innovation and governance barriers that hinder the uptake of technologies which are necessary for the energy transition will be identified and addressed.

The NWWAC welcomes this initiative by DG MARE, as the energy transition of the fisheries sector has been an important theme in this AC and has gained even more relevance with the soaring fuel prices that followed the war in Ukraine. The NWWAC also agrees with the objectives of the strategy as outlined in the call for evidence and especially with the need of a strong multi-stakeholder engagement on the matter.

The NWWAC had already expressed its views on the topic in two important pieces of advice issued in 2021, [NWWAC advice on the impact of climate change on fisheries in the North Western Waters](#)<sup>1</sup> and [NWWAC feedback on the public initiative "CO2 emissions of engines - methodology for their reduction"](#)<sup>2</sup>. The matter was also addressed in the [NWWAC response to the targeted consultation on the functioning of the CFP](#) submitted on 14 March 2022.

To begin with, the NWWAC would like to recall that a sustainable European fishing industry produces a low carbon, high-value protein for consumers, compared to other animal protein producing sectors, as well as highlight the importance of promoting seafood as part of sustainable, climate-neutral food consumption. The contribution of the total maritime sector to total CO2 emissions is less than 3%<sup>3</sup>, with the fisheries sector’s footprint being very small. However, the sector understands the need and wishes to be part of the solution and not the problem, embracing the goal of decarbonisation from day one.

Technology that would support the decarbonisation of the sector is constantly developing and improving. Options include improvements in engine functioning and the use of different energy sources (solar, wind and hydrogen). LNG and hydrogen fuel-cell technologies seem to be the most promising alternatives. Quite a lot of activity is taking place worldwide in this regard. Such projects

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<sup>1</sup> [Commission's reply to the NWWAC advice on the impact of Climate Change on fisheries in the NWW](#) of 9 July 2021

<sup>2</sup> This advice was mentioned in the latest [Staff Working Document accompanying the Communication on fishing opportunities 2023](#), highlighting that it led to a modification of the final Implementing Act.

<sup>3</sup> Fourth Greenhouse Gas Study 2020 by the International Maritime Organization



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are good examples for the European sector to consider for future perspectives. Hydrogen technology could be a steppingstone towards a carbon free seafood industry. Electric power might be feasible for certain fleet segments, for example coastal, small-scale fleets. It is important that the fisheries sector receives adequate attention in the 2021-2027 funding programme to ensure that its needs are examined in the developments of these new technologies, while bearing in mind the risk of a withdrawal of banks from supporting investment in the context of the implementation of the Taxonomy regulation. The European Commission has been investing in research in hydrogen technology and has funded 108 projects related to this under the Horizon 2020 programme. However, only very few were related to the maritime sector and even fewer to the fishing sector.

In the case of a shift towards alternative fuels, several logistical issues need to be considered in relation to marketing, ports equipment (charging stations, LNG storage, etc.), maintenance and crew training. EU fishing companies are continually devising and implementing creative solutions to save energy. However, the current technologies are still not a direct alternative to fossil fuels, and while the industry is trying to reduce its environmental impact by improving engine and gear efficiency, more knowledge is needed regarding technological possibilities.

Moreover, it is important to consider the limitations on tonnage and propulsive power of EU vessels imposed by the 1992 reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. While this has not changed in the past 25 years, it is a shared opinion among fishing professionals that vessel tonnage is poorly suited to the economic and technical challenges that arise for the construction of today's vessels (including purposes of seeking better profitability, better crew comfort and installation of technologies that minimise the sector's environmental footprint). The origin of the need for additional tonnage faced by fishing companies is possibly due to the fact that the current framework does not anticipate the implementation of new technologies (LNG, hydrogen, etc.) and does not consider the search for better energy efficiency beyond the current mandatory standard.

Overall, there are both regulatory and technological constraints to the energy transition of EU fishing vessels. The NWWAC believes that the ongoing evaluation of the CFP can play a very important role in the development and evolution of this framework and thus in the energy transition of the EU fishing sector.

Finally, the NWWAC acknowledges that the Commission envisages the launch of a specific targeted consultation with Member States and Advisory Councils to prepare this initiative, as mentioned in the call for evidence. The NWWAC stands ready and willing to further work on the topic with the support of experts to prepare its contribution.