

Aquatic Blue Food Coalition Declaration

A Coalition to champion aquatic blue foods for nutritious, equitable, sustainable, and climate-resilient food systems.*

Background

There is a growing global consensus among policymakers that transforming our food systems is a priority to addressing several interconnected global challenges – climate change, food and nutrition security, biodiversity loss - and to achieve the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals.

Sustainable blue food systems are an integral part of this transformation. Thoughtful policy changes, increased investments, and partnerships to fully integrate blue foods into food systems decision-making at national, regional, and international levels are needed.

The Aquatic Blue Food Coalition was born from the recognition that sustainable and equitable food systems are vital for achieving the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and advancing international commitments including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and UN Convention on Biological Diversity (UN CBD). Formed after the UN Food Systems Summit 2021 and officially launched at the UN Ocean Conference 2022, we aim to ensure that the diversity and potential of blue foods are fully integrated into equitable solutions for global food and nutrition security, a resilient climate and thriving biodiversity.

The Aquatic Blue Food Coalition uses its wide network of members and expertise - governments, intergovernmental organizations, academic institutions, civil society and industry - to work with decision-makers to deliver on the potential of blue food solutions to benefit people and the planet.

The Coalition is grounded in the international consensus and guidelines already achieved – the 2021 Committee on Fisheries Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture, the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, the Committee on World Food Security, UN Nutrition, the ProBlue program of the World Bank and the Blue Transformation Roadmap of the Food and Agriculture Organization.

***Blue foods: Foods derived from aquatic fish, shellfish, plants or algae that are captured or cultivated in freshwater and marine environments.**

Commitment

Members are joining together in a shared vision about the following:

Our mission:

Our mission is to advocate for the recognition of blue foods in global food system discussions, mobilize support and adequate funding for their integration, and drive on-the-ground action to foster equitable, sustainable, and climate-resilient food systems.

The Aquatic Blue Food Coalition rises to the challenge of still-untapped potential of aquatic/blue foods to meet protein needs and reduce micronutrient and other nutrition deficiencies, improve heart, brain and eye health, and replace consumption of less healthy foods.

The Coalition recognizes the important role of these foods as part of the climate solution. Recent analyses also show that climate change is impacting aquatic food production and aquatic ecosystems significantly, and that investment in climate resilient management is an urgent priority to avert significant negative impacts in the tropics, where climate impacts will be most severe and where the most vulnerable populations are concentrated.

Our Key objectives:

- **Raise the profile of aquatic foods:**

We engage with high-level decision-makers at national, regional, and international levels to advocate for the recognition and integration of blue foods' potential in transformations towards food systems that deliver for both people and the planet.

- **Mobilize support:**

We connect and work with multiple stakeholders to mobilize investment, technical capacity and partnerships for countries, or groups of countries, looking to integrate aquatic foods into their food systems policy.

- **Knowledge exchange and place-based action:**

We foster knowledge exchange between our members and provide them with support to catalyze action in key regions and/or countries by helping them understand their blue food needs and possibilities, and matching them with funding and/or technical assistance.

Since its onset the Aquatic Blue Food Coalition has actively engaged multiple stakeholders and high-level decision-makers. Please find below some of our achievements:

- The Coalition has worked to secure the integration of blue foods in the COP28 Emirates Declaration on Food and Agriculture; and the Coalition was also a signatory of the Non-State Actors Call to Action for Transforming Food Systems for People, Nature, and Climate.

- The Coalition has worked with the School Meals Coalition to integrate blue foods into their international guidelines on planet-friendly school meals.
- Advocacy at the 24th meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea. The meeting's topic of discussion was "The ocean as a source of sustainable food". Members brought expertise on subjects such as sustainable aquaculture, how to overcome political challenges and the role of blue foods in low-carbon food systems.

Organization

A Secretariat

The Coalition is led by a Secretariat. It is currently jointly managed by the Environmental Defense Fund and the Stanford Center for Ocean Solutions, with leadership and strategic guidance provided by a Chair, currently from the Government of Iceland.

A Strategic Advisory Committee

The Committee represents blue food experts and other practitioners from both the Global South and North. It supports and advises the Coalition by providing strategic direction to champion the cause of blue foods in global food system discussions. Meetings are held quarterly and on an ad hoc basis if needed.

Members

The Coalition is multi-sectoral, drawing its strength from diverse representatives that include governments, intergovernmental organizations, academic institutions, civil society and industry. Membership in the Coalition is free and requires no financial commitment.

Bimonthly online meetings are held with a clear agenda set for each. These meetings enable regular networking, briefings of interested parties, advocacy, and inclusive membership participation for the purpose:

- Of providing briefings on upcoming international meetings and other opportunities to raise the profile of blue foods and coordinate engagement; and
- Of members presenting updates on their work and engagement priorities.
- Of presenting country or regional initiatives that need support from Coalition members which can be matched with funding or technical assistance.

The Coalition has brought together over 35 members that have expressed their commitment to blue foods as a priority:

Parties: European Union, Fiji, Germany, Iceland, Japan, New Zealand, Palau, United States of America, Canada, Portugal, Madagascar.

Intergovernmental Organizations: African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), The Pacific Community (SPC), WorldFish One CGIAR.

Academic Institutions: Stanford Center for Ocean Solutions, Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD).

Civil Society: Environmental Defense Fund, WWF, Friends of Ocean Action, Rare, European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD), Oceana, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Marine Stewardship Council, Regional Cluster “North-East” – Bulgaria, Conservation International, Village Farmers Initiative, Lloyd's Register Foundation, Care International, Wildlife Conservation Society, Positively Groundfish, African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network (AWFISHNET) of Nigeria, African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network (AWFISHNET) of Malawi, Zero Hunger Coalition, World Resources Institute.

Industry: Global Seaweed Coalition, Global Salmon Initiative, Blue Food Partnership, FUTUREFISH.

The Aquatic Blue Food Coalition is always open to work with new partners around the world to ensure aquatic blue foods are represented in international, regional and national policy discussions and become an integral part of nutritious, equitable, sustainable, and climate-resilient food systems.