



**AQUATIC  
BLUE FOOD  
COALITION**

# Activity Report

**2021 - 2023**

---

This report shares the progress made by the Aquatic Blue Food Coalition over the period of 2021-2023 in advancing its key objectives and mission. We hope it will give our stakeholders and partners an overall view of our core activities, collaborations and achievements. We thank all of our members for their efforts in joining our work and championing blue foods for global food security, a resilient climate, and thriving biodiversity.

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

\*Blue foods: Foods derived from fish, shellfish, aquatic plants, and algae caught or cultivated from freshwater and marine environments.

## Who We Are

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 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 to foster equitable, sustainable, and climate-resilient food systems.

The Aquatic Blue Food Coalition originated from the U.N. Food Systems Summit 2021 as an action group focused on fulfilling the potential of SDG14 (Life Below Water) for global food security, a resilient climate, and thriving biodiversity.

It has brought together more than 35 active members from government, the private sector, academic institutions, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society from around the world . It is jointly managed by the Environmental Defense Fund and the Stanford Center for Ocean Solutions, with leadership and strategic guidance provided by Iceland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The full list of members can be found on our website - [aquaticbluefood.org](https://aquaticbluefood.org).

The Aquatic Blue Food Coalition uses its wide network of members and expertise to work with decision-makers to deliver on the potential of blue food solutions to benefit people and the planet.

With this activities report, we aim to share progress in fulfilling our mission and meeting our key objectives:

- In advocacy & policy influence: raising the profile of blue foods by engaging high-level decision-makers to advocate for the recognition and integration of blue foods in transformations towards food systems that deliver for both people and the planet.
- In collaboration & partnerships: mobilizing support for countries, or groups of countries, looking to integrate blue foods into their food systems policy.
- In place-based action: driving knowledge exchange and place-based action by fostering discussions between our members and providing them with support to catalyze action in key regions.

# Foreword

The Aquatic Blue Food Coalition emerged in the preparation process of the UN Food Systems Summit in September 2021 when a number of stakeholders realized that food from the ocean and inland waters was neglected in conversations and reports that sought to identify promising ways in which to transform our food systems. This all took place with reference to a nature positive, nutritious way to feed a growing global population. To many of us, aquatic blue foods should feature prominently in such global plans. A number of interested partners joined to influence the Summit agenda: Stanford Center for Ocean Solutions, Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Iceland. The team kicked off a multi-stakeholder Coalition which has been growing in size and influence for three years.

The key mission of the Coalition is twofold: 1) Advocacy in the international fora for the importance and role of aquatic food, and 2) an effort to bring multilateral donors and investors to the table to capitalize on the promise of aquatic blue foods. The Coalition does not see itself as a program implementer, but a catalyzer for change in the two respective areas.

From the outset the Coalition was firmly anchored in the ecosystem of support to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)-based, [United Nations Food System Coordination Hub](#) and national conveners for food systems transformation. The Coalition is aligned with the Blue Transformation Roadmap of FAO and similar endeavors of the UN system. It has successfully sought to support and influence the climate solutions platform as evidenced in its high profile at the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP) 28. Having participated in all major venues for food, climate, biodiversity and ocean affairs during the last three years the Coalition is aiming for high impact at the UN Ocean Conference in Nice in 2025 and future COPs.

This activity report which has been compiled by our Secretariat speaks for itself. We, as a Coalition, drawing on so many strong resources, can legitimately claim success with other likeminded partners in a much greater recognition of the importance of aquatic blue foods now compared to a few years back. The climate, nutrition, biodiversity nexus is now more broadly and clearly understood in the international fora, and the positive role of aquatic blue foods better embedded in the policies of a growing number of stakeholders. Still lagging is a more active engagement of funding mechanisms. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 14 is the least funded of the SDGs despite the great growth potential of sustainably managed healthy ocean and inland waters.

It is with some pride that I acknowledge the impressive role of Stanford and EDF in building this Coalition and I am glad to see that the Government of Iceland is committed to provide continued support in a number of ways to the leadership of the Coalition; Iceland is a small member country of the UN but a large ocean state and the leverage of our foreign service, in Capital and in our missions in Rome and New York will continue to be of value. Most important is the dedication of our members who make this Coalition such a formidable knowledge center. The Coalition will continue to offer its services to a variety of entities and contribute to healthy and sustainable transformation of our food systems.

Stefán Jón Hafstein.

*Since 2021 Stefán Jón, the former ambassador of Iceland to the Rome Based Agencies, has been the chair of the Aquatic Blue Food Coalition and the Special Envoy of Ocean Affairs for Iceland. He is stepping down in both roles July 2024.*

# Our Progress

## Advocacy and Policy Influence

### Driving change at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

We are proactively positioning blue foods as a key part of climate solutions. We are working with the COP28 Presidency and national delegations to include blue foods into UNFCCC processes under the Sharm-el-Sheik joint work and by supporting developing guidelines for NDCs and NAPs. At the UNFCCC SB58 Ocean and Climate Change Dialogues held in Bonn, we were identified as an exemplary model for effective partnerships.

### Securing the Recognition of Blue Foods in International Agreements

We have successfully influenced key policy documents in the UN framework to include the importance of aquatic blue foods in the context of a healthy ocean and food security, most notably the agreed document of the UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon 2022, the UN General Assembly declaration on Ocean Affairs, and the COFI report of 2022.

### Contributing to the UN Food Systems Summit Structure

We regularly report and participate in the UNFSS Coordination Hub activities, expecting to provide our services to national conveners and actions rooted in National Pathways.

### Elevating Blue Foods on the Global Stage

In collaboration with our partners, we have arranged and hosted high-profile events at international conferences to create awareness of the need to mobilize resources and influence key decision makers. Amongst others, this includes side events at Our Ocean Conferences 2022 and 2023, UN Ocean Conference, the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), UNFCCC COP 27, UN Convention on Biodiversity COP 15, World Summit Davos,

and the Vatican Science Symposium. We have also been requested as a partner for briefing G20 policy makers on integrating blue foods into food systems policy and practice.

## Collaboration and partnerships

### Fostering an Inclusive Multistakeholder Community

The Coalition welcomes a diverse range of stakeholders into its community and hosts monthly calls to foster global collaboration and learning. We have initiated a two-year communications campaign to generate interest and support for funding and implementing enhanced aquatic food production to combat hunger and improve nutrition, particularly in the context of SDG 2 (Zero Hunger). Funding for this is currently under consideration. We are actively engaging with other groups within the UNFSS ecosystem, including the Global Action Network for Sustainable Food from the Oceans and Inland Waters for Food Security and Nutrition (GAN), Zero Hunger Coalition, Healthy Diets Coalition, Social Protection and Food Systems Coalition, and the School Meals Coalition.

### Achieving Recognition Under the UN Decade for Ocean Science for Sustainable Development

A Program titled 'Blue Food Futures' developed by the Coalition and its partners has been endorsed by the UN Decade for Ocean Science for Sustainable Development with the ambition to facilitate more applied research on blue foods in food system transformation.

### Supporting Coastal Communities and Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

We are actively engaged with major international funding sources to examine how funding streams for nature-positive food production, ecosystem services, climate-smart agriculture and aquaculture, biodiversity protection, and other categories of finance can more inclusively target aquatic food production as we aim to mobilize resources for, those most in need of blue food investments,

such as marginalized coastal communities and blue food dependent SIDS.

## **Driving knowledge and place-based action**

### **Africa**

We have identified the enormous potential of aquaculture in Africa as a strategic area for matching implementation partners with donors. A workshop with Stanford University, the World Bank, FAO, the Global Environment Facility, and stakeholders from Africa led by AUDA-NEPAD has already resulted in progress and a work plan aligned with the Blue Transformation Strategy of FAO. At the FAO Conference in July 2023, we organized a special event highlighting the potential of aquaculture in Africa, which was co-convened by the Governments of Iceland and Madagascar, the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), and the Global Action Network for Sustainable Food from the Oceans and Inland Waters for Food Security and Nutrition (GAN).

### **Indonesia**

We have been asked to support the planning ministry in bringing blue foods into the national development strategies and preparing a blue food assessment for Indonesia.

### **Pacific**

We are currently collaborating with the Pacific Community (SPC) on a Pacific-wide Blue Food Initiative and a Pacific Blue Food Assessment, as mandated by leaders of Pacific Island countries and territories and designed in consultation with their governments. The aim of the Initiative is to develop programs that can address key challenges around nutrition, resilience, and sustainability, and to assemble a coalition of funders needed to support their implementation.



**AQUATIC  
BLUE FOOD  
COALITION**

[aquaticfood.org](http://aquaticfood.org)