EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES
Maritime Policy and Blue Economy
Economic analysis, Markets and Impact assessment

2026 Economic Report on the EU Aquaculture

STECF Expert Working Group (EWG 26-12 and EWG 26-13)
7-9 and 19-21 October 2026

Terms of reference

***DG MARE focal persons**: Giacomo Petrucco, Angel Calvo (MARE A4)*

***Chairs:** Rasmus Nielsen, Ignacio Llorente*

Background and objectives

The report on the EU Aquaculture Sector is one of the main sources of economic and socio-demographic data for scientific advice on the performance of the EU aquaculture industry. It is also increasingly used by scientific bodies, national administrations and international institutions.

Following the 2026 DCF/EU-MAP call for economic data on the EU aquaculture sector, **the EWG is requested to analyse and comment on the economic performance of the EU and national aquaculture sectors** between 2023, 2024 (2025 when available).

The report should provide an in-depth look at the different factors affecting the economic performance of the EU aquaculture industry with a **special focus on the major drivers and issues affecting the sector**. Besides interpreting and explaining the quantitative results, the report should contain **the experts' analysis and assessment of** the drivers of the economic performance and other aspects of policy relevance. The main objective of the report is **to present high-quality interpretation of all data outputs** to ensure their usefulness for DG MARE's policy development, Member States and the industry. Among others, the following factors could be taken into account: markets and trade determinants of aquaculture production, competitiveness, market prices and consumption, sustainability, innovation, links and interconnections with the local fishing fleet and the fish processing sector, the role of European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund support, contribution to the local communities and the Blue Economy, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

The main socio-economic **indicators should**, to the extent possible, **be put into context with homologous figures** at the EU and national levels, e.g., national average salaries, GDP, etc. Imputation of missing values may be required to obtain coherent time series and indicators that reflect a robust estimate of EU aggregates. Experts are asked to **analyse the sector and its components**.

The final draft of the EWG report will be reviewed by the STECF during its plenary meeting in winter 2026.

Structure and content

As a basis for the structure of the report, the EWG is requested to work and comment on, at least, the following items:

- An **overview of the economic performance of the EU aquaculture sector**. This should include the drivers and main trends based on expert knowledge. It must include the following:
    - EU aquaculture sector overview. This would include the evolution for the EU total for the main variables as well as a comparison across aquaculture subsectors (marine finfish, marine shellfish, freshwater).

  - Economic data and performance indicators (e.g. production, revenue items, cost items, earnings, profitability, etc.).
  - Employment and remuneration indicators.
  - Comparative analysis across Member States highlighting the differences and similarities of national industries.
  - Analysis of economic performance by aquaculture subsector (marine finfish, shellfish, freshwater finfish, and algae) and by main species.
  - Highlights of the economic sustainability chapter.
  - Drivers, trends and outlook.

- **National chapters** on the economic performance of the aquaculture industry providing:
  - National aquaculture overview including industry structure.
  - Production and sales.
  - Economic performance indicators.
  - Employment and remuneration indicators.
  - Structure and performance of aquaculture segments.
  - Description of trends and drivers based on expert knowledge.
  - Outlook.

In the sections of drivers and outlook, the experts should use their expert knowledge to provide an indication for the period 2017-2024, showing how cost indicators evolved, taking into account the exceptional economic shocks in the period 2020-2022 and making some considerations on the possible consequences of the 2026 Middle East crisis, which has led to renewed spikes in fossil fuel energy prices.

- **Special topic on nowcast:**
  Following up on the previous Aquaculture Economic report, a nowcasting exercise will be included as a special topic. This should bring the report more up to date, since data series will be only available up to 2024 or, in a few cases, up to 2025 and making some considerations on the possible consequences of the 2026 Middle East crisis, which has led to renewed spikes in fossil fuel energy prices.

- **Special topic on economic sustainability:**
  The EWG is requested to develop a short section of the report that focuses on economic sustainability, as in the 2024 version of the STECF aquaculture report. This should include the use of economic sustainability indicators and follow the structure used in 2024. The experts should use their knowledge to select the indicators that best capture the sector's economic sustainability and for which data and analysis are most robust, and to provide an assessment of the period 2017–2024 showing how these indicators evolved, considering both **nominal** and **real values** and analysing the sector's overall economic sustainability.

- **Annexes**
  - Data coverage and quality.
  - Potential complementary charts and tables not included in the main text.

Streamlining of the report and data issues

After eight reports that have expanded over time, the structure and content of the report should be streamlined. In particular, the following should be taken into account:

The possibility of improving the readability of the report by grouping some of the charts and tables should be explored.

Given the increasing length of the time series, **the tables and figures in the report** (both for the EU overview and the national chapters) will cover the period 2017-2024. **The workbook(s)** accompanying the report **should still include the whole database** with all years in the time-series.

The narrative should add value to the figures compiled in the charts and tables. This could be achieved by highlighting a few figures with special relevance and by explaining what the drivers and/or consequences are.

The experts are expected to add value to the report **from their knowledge of the sector**. This should be an important criterion for the selection of experts invited to participate in the working group. **Experts should provide a forward-looking perspective in the report** about their knowledge about the developments in the sectors throughout 2024, 2025 and 2026.

The main **socio-economic indicators**, if possible and where relevant, should also be **put into context with** homologous figures at the **EU and national levels** (e.g., national average salaries, GDP, etc.), or in relations with the other fisheries sectors (the fishing fleet and fish processing).

Given the experience of the past with missing data and the fact that the collection and transmission of data on fresh aquaculture have only done on a **voluntarily basis**, and given the existence of thresholds for data collection and transmission, the **use of complementary sources of data (e.g. from Eurostat and FAO**) may be required for some countries.

When aggregating national indicators to obtain the EU totals, special attention should be paid to maintaining a homogeneous number of Member States. The data for **EU total** should reflect an estimation of the actual evolution and **should not be distorted by the inclusion (or exclusion) of Member States throughout the analysed period**. The compilation of EU aggregates may require the use of imputation in some Member States.

The economic report on the aquaculture sector **is produced on a biennial basis**. **This should be taken into account when presenting the information and making the interpretations**. Besides the long-term evolution, a special focus should be made not only on the last year, but rather on the last two years, when relevant. Indications on the latest developments should be presented in annual terms and not with respect to the previous report (which implies an increase or decrease over two years).

A discussion and explanation about **data coverage, data issues** and how they were addressed should be included in an Annex.

Data transmission

The EWG is requested to ensure that all unresolved data transmission (DT) issues encountered prior to and during the EWG meeting are reported on-line via the Data Transmission Monitoring Tool (DTMT). Guidance on precisely what should be inserted in the DTMT, log-on credentials and access rights will be provided during the EWG.