



Aquatic/Blue Food Coalition

The opportunity

Blue, or aquatic, foods – fish, shellfish, aquatic plants and algae captured or cultivated in freshwater and marine ecosystems – play a central role in food and nutrition security for billions of people; they are a cornerstone of the livelihoods, economies, and cultures of many coastal and inland communities.

Despite their unique value and interconnections with terrestrial food systems, aquatic foods are often left out of food system analyses, discussions, research, decisions, solutions and resource allocations. They are managed as a natural resource, and not as a critical component of strategies to deliver healthy, sustainable and equitable food systems.

Realizing the potential of blue foods to help end malnutrition and build nature-positive and resilient food systems is a critical element to meet the UNFSS vision to “launch bold new actions, solutions and strategies to deliver progress on [10 of the] 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), each of which relies on healthier, more sustainable and more equitable food systems”. Blue foods can make key contributions to diet-related health challenges – by reducing micronutrient deficiencies, improving heart, brain and eye health, and replacing consumption of less healthy red and processed meats – and be a part of the climate solution. Blue food transformation will not only increase the supply of nutritious food but also contribute to community resilience, good jobs, gender equity, and poverty alleviation. Thus, enhanced attention to this critical component of the planet’s food production and nutrition system will provide essential support to the mission of the Coalition of Action for Zero Hunger.

A series of international agreements reflect widespread consensus on much of what needs to be done. The urgent need is to mobilize action to deliver on those commitments. That is the ambition of the Coalition for Aquatic/Blue Foods.

Why a Coalition of Action?

SDGs 6 and 14 call for restoring and protecting marine and freshwater ecosystems, reducing pollution that contaminates those systems, ending overfishing and the subsidies that fuel overfishing, and supporting small-scale producers. Blue foods also have a vital role to play in achieving many other SDGs – in addressing hunger and malnutrition, reducing poverty and providing livelihoods, and reducing the impacts of the food system on climate change and biodiversity loss.

The [UN FSS](#) reflects the growing international consensus that a sustainable and equitable food system is critical to achieving the SDGs. A great number of national statements at the UN FSS focused on the importance of blue/aquatic food which is also reflected in national pathways of countries which participated in the preparatory process. The UN Special Envoy of the Ocean, Mr. Peter Thomson, has been a tireless advocate for the objectives of the Coalition.

There is growing international consensus – among policymakers who are focused on food, and those who are focused on fisheries – that blue foods are centrally important to the food system, and should be fully integrated into food system decision-making from this day forth. In 2020, the [World Committee on Food Security](#) concluded that sustainable fisheries and aquaculture are “a fundamental condition for food security and nutrition.” In its [2021 COFI Declaration](#) for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture, the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) unanimously declared that governments should “ensure that fish are fully considered in national, regional and global food security and nutrition strategies.” UN Nutrition has made a similar call in its [recent paper on aquatic foods](#). The [International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture \(IYFA 2022\)](#), is a singular opportunity to advance action.

What is needed now is for Member States and a broad range of other stakeholders to come together in joined up action to tackle the challenges and deliver on the promise and opportunities of blue foods. The goal is to create a capability that is a valuable complement to what FAO Fisheries already does – distinctive both in drawing together Member States and an array of other actors, and in focusing on bringing blue foods to broader food system policymaking and policymakers; but building this in good coordination with FAO Fisheries and other key members of the Rome-based agencies

What are the Coalition’s Actions?

The Coalition [commits to work together to deliver concrete progress on these priorities](#). The coalition has two key missions:

(1) to raise the profile of aquatic foods in the context of food systems overall, so that they will be placed where they belong on the agenda (and budget) of decision makers not usually aware of their significance, such as health ministers, finance ministers, development ministers and prime ministers, and

(2) to mobilize support and cooperation for specific projects and opportunities to drive implementation of blue food priorities, in order to complement and accelerate the work already under way via FAO and other Rome-based agencies.

Coalition members may find opportunities to advance action at a regional or global scale. We anticipate, however, that most often Coalition initiatives will support action by countries: identifying a group of countries wanting to implement a core set of reforms or innovations and mustering investment, technical capacity and partnerships to support them. In particular, the coalition would look for opportunities to reach decision-makers who don't usually pay attention to fish – health ministers, development ministers, prime ministers to:

- Bring aquatic foods into the heart of food system decision-making.
- Protect and develop the potential of blue foods to help end malnutrition.
- Support the central role of small-scale actors in fisheries and aquaculture.
- Protect inland and ocean food production against external threats.
- Scale up research and collaboration in science, management and markets for aquatic food production to maximize nutrition and health, ecological and economic benefits, and resilience
- Unlock the potential of sustainable aquatic farming:
- Raise global awareness of the value of inland fisheries and their importance to nature-positive food and nutrition security.
- Fund blue food research, innovation, governance and management at a level commensurate with their contribution to global nutrition and livelihoods
- Enlist industry to innovate and lead

Who are Coalition Members?

The Coalition has brought together over 20 Member States that have expressed their commitment to blue foods as a priority, and other stakeholders, including a broad range of civil society organizations (global environmental and development NGOs; national and local NGOs; fisher cooperatives); diverse collaborative platforms from the private sector and leading research institutions.

The Coalition will work in partnership with the Rome-based Agencies -- FAO, WFP, IFAD -- and with WorldFish and the CGIAR. It will take advantage of existing networks like the

[Global Action Network](#) that Norway leads, the [Blue Food Assessment](#), the [Safe Seaweed Coalition](#), [Rise Up for the Oceans and other regional collaborations such as the Pacific Community](#). It will align and interact with the efforts of the UN Decade on Nutrition and the UN Decade of Ocean Science, and with other Summit coalitions like the School Feeding Programs and Food is Never Waste to leverage and amplify progress.

What are upcoming Coalition activities?

The Coalition members are coordinating action through a Secretariat structure, to operationalize these commitments and announce progress on meeting these deliverables, with a consistent and action-oriented aquatic foods agenda and message. This includes:

- Our Oceans Conference, April 2022 – The Coalition was granted a side event titled: Blue Foods: Crucial Component to a Climate-Resilient Blue Economy in Global Communities. This event will unite leaders and stakeholders to elevate blue foods into decision-making arenas for oceans, coastal and inland aquatic resources, and small-scale actors.
- United Nations Ocean Conference, June 2022 – The Coalition members are collaborating with a number of international actors to organize a side event that aims to strengthen the Blue Food Coalition through increased membership and resource mobilization, create a fund for Blue Foods projects to bring blue foods into the heart of decision-making and recognize the roles and rights of small-scale fisheries for providing food security, nutrition and coastal resilience, and securing their coastal stewardship of blue foods

The Coalition is also scoping opportunities at: UNFCCC COP 27, where we will make the case for nature positive fisheries and aquatic food production (such as mangrove and seaweed restoration and production) to the attainment of Nationally Determined Contributions); CBD COP 15, where we will advocate for 100% management of EEZs as a crucial mechanism for protecting and restoring biodiversity, consistent with the recommendations of the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy; and IYAF, as appropriate, within the varying platforms and competencies of our members.



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