

8 tips on going green in the seafood sector

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Consumers and buyers in Europe are becoming ever more aware of the environmental impact of the production of seafood. This is resulting in increased demand for sustainable seafood. As a seafood exporter, it is important for you to understand how to reduce your waste output and carbon footprint, to apply the latest knowledge and innovations and adopt green principles. Working together with other businesses and stakeholders that are part of your supply chain will also help you to become environmentally sustainable.

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1. Turn environmental sustainability into better business

All those involved in the seafood sector, including farmers, fishing companies, seafood processors and traders, have an impact on the environment – or 'environmental footprint'. Intensive fish farms tend to produce significant amounts of solid waste that may pollute local waters. Many of the world's fisheries have already been overfished, which means that catching fish now requires more effort and fuel. Processors and traders use large amounts of energy and plastic.

Unsustainable business practices not only harm the environment but also involve serious operational risks and limited market access. By going green, on the other hand, you can turn environmental sustainability into more business, and better business.

Prioritise healthy fish and fish stocks

If you implement environmentally sustainable practices in the aquaculture sector such as reducing waste and improving feeding practices to optimise water quality, you will get better results from the fish or shrimp that you farm. This, in turn, will result in a more profitable business venture for you.

In Myanmar for example, aquaculture producers have joined forces in a private cooperative to work with government stakeholders and foreign partners to create of a national standard for good aquaculture practices. The [MyanmarGAQP standard](#) is accompanied by a [field guide](#) for farmers with practical tips to produce seafood through sustainable means, which has reportedly improved the output of the participating farms. It has also helped farmers to acquire the necessary authorisations to export to the European Union (EU).

Similarly, preventing overfishing in the fisheries sector and ensuring that stocks can recover will result in a larger and healthier population of fish. This not only restores the natural ecosystem, but also makes fishing easier and more profitable, as less effort is required to catch the same amount of fish.

The [Indonesian Pole & Line and Handline Fisheries Association](#) has done a terrific job by organising fishers that target large tuna for export. Together with other stakeholders, they have created a sustainable fishery that benefits local fishers, processors and traders. Their members' tuna is now sold across the globe, including by several European retailers. The ultimate goal of [the Indonesian tuna project](#) has been to acquire [Marine Stewardship Council](#) (MSC) certification, an internationally recognised external verification of their efforts to go green, and this goal was achieved in 2021.

Protect and build your reputation

Being a responsible business owner and taking your environmental commitment seriously will also help you to build better relationships with the local community that you are part of, and with neighbouring fish farms. It also improves the image of your company. This can help you attract larger and long-term buyers and investors that take environmental sustainability more seriously and want to build long-term business relationships.

Minimising reputational risks by selecting trustworthy suppliers is a key aspect of the buying process for large retailers like Ahold Delhaize, Carrefour and COOP. Expect a serious due-diligence process before any seafood products are bought from your company.

In Sri Lanka, seafood processors and exporters, such as [Jay Sea Foods](#) and [Global Seafoods Sri Lanka](#), joined forces to build up an international reputation. Through the Seafood Exporters' Association of Sri Lanka, they set out to improve the health of Yellowfin tuna, Bigeye tuna and swordfish stocks around Sri Lanka and create a truly sustainable longline fishery. They have also initiated a fisheries improvement project (FIP) to realise their goals and have received financial support from buyers and retailers in Europe to do so.

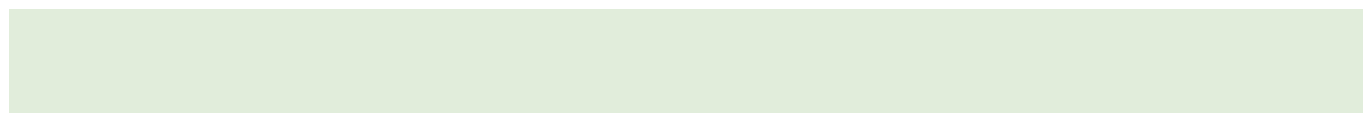
Gain wider market access

With consumers in Europe taking environmental sustainability very seriously, going green in the seafood sector gives producers from low and middle-income countries wider access to the European market. It also makes it easier to do business. It is key to understand that this also helps you maintain access to the market, since it is becoming increasingly hard to do any business on the continent without having environmentally sustainable business practices in place.

Getting your products certified by a third-party label like [MSC](#) for fisheries products or [ASC](#) for aquaculture products is definitely an advantage. The world of certification can be confusing, but the Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative is [benchmarking different standards](#) in order to help. To learn more about the certification of seafood and current market trends in Europe, have a look at the CBI study on [exporting certified sustainable seafood to Europe](#).

An excellent example is [Regal Springs](#), a company that farms tilapia in Indonesia, Honduras and Mexico. The company has strong environmental and social policies in place and has opted to certify this through the [Aquaculture Stewardship Council](#) and [Best Aquaculture Practices](#) labels. This has helped them to establish successful long-term relationships with a range of retailers and wholesalers around the globe.

The same goes for the members of the Indonesian Pole & Line and Handline Fisheries Association and exporters that are part of the Fisheries Improvement Programme in Sri Lanka, whose commitment to sustainable fishing practices has opened the door to the European market. Tuna from Indonesia is now sold by retailers in the Netherlands under the [John West](#) brand.



Tips:

Read [the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nation's \(FAO\) guide](#) for handy tips on how to properly plan your aquaculture improvement project.

Use [the Fishery Improvement Project's \(FIP\) guidelines](#) for developing your project, using WWF's practical tips. The guide describes practical cases studies from Vietnam, Mozambique and Indonesia.

Have a look at other seafood related studies by CBI, including [Fish and Seafood market trends](#) and [buyer requirements](#).

2. Reduce your carbon footprint

Climate change is the biggest environmental concern for European consumers and buyers. You can measure and reduce your carbon footprints to create a unique selling point and benefit from this trend. This can provide you with a competitive advantage in the European marketplace. But what exactly does it involve and how does it impact you?

Most scientists agree that climate change is predominantly caused by emissions of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO₂). Carbon dioxide is released into the air whenever fossil fuels are burned. Lowering your carbon footprint means reducing your consumption of fossil fuels. It is easier to measure a company's carbon footprint than its entire environmental footprint, and so the carbon footprint is currently the main measure used in Europe.

Companies across Europe are actively informing the public about their carbon footprint and that of the products they sell. Most wholesalers and retailers are ultimately aiming for net-zero carbon emissions, in line with the [European Green Deal](#). Ahold Delhaize, with over 7,400 retail stores in the Netherlands and Belgium, is aiming to reduce 50% of its emissions by 2030, and to reach net-zero carbon emissions across its own operations by 2040. Have a look at their [PowerPoint presentation](#). The French retailer Carrefour has set a similar [target for 2040](#).

The ambitious commitments of these seafood buyers will most likely lead to additional requirements for suppliers when it comes to their carbon footprints. If you are able to provide details of the carbon footprint of your company and products and can provide evidence that you are actively working to reduce it, you may give yourself a competitive advantage. So what can you do in practical terms as a seafood exporter in order to meet the carbon goals of your clients?

Key contributors to carbon in seafood

The carbon footprint of seafood is relatively low compared to livestock such as cattle or pigs, but you can always do more to reduce the footprint of your company and products. In the aquaculture sector, the most important contributors to the carbon footprint are feed ingredients. Ingredients that have a significant carbon footprint include intensively farmed soy and fishmeal and fish oil from fisheries. The second major contributor is energy usage. This includes the electricity used for pumps and aerators, as well as the electricity used to refrigerate and transport harvested fish.

In the fisheries sector, the biggest contributors are the fuel used by fishing vessels and the energy used to freeze or cool the fish on board the vessel. For processors and traders, it is the energy used by plant machinery and to transport the fish to clients. Here, a significant contributor is long-distance transport, particularly flying fresh fish from Africa or Asia to Europe. From this perspective, it may be worth considering selling your fish locally, instead of overseas.

The overall carbon footprint of a product is calculated by adding the carbon footprints of each step in the supply chain - from catching or farming the fish through to the final sale to the end consumer. To do this, traceability, transparency and collaboration in the supply chain are important. Without these, it is difficult for you to calculate the footprint of the product properly, or to engage in any effort to reduce this footprint.

Differences between species and production systems

In aquaculture, species that are herbivorous or omnivorous have a lower carbon footprint than carnivorous fish. This is because feed for carnivorous species tends to contain wild fish, which adds to the total footprint of the final product.

Little energy is required to farm species in cages or extensive ponds. These farms have a much smaller footprint than land-based farms where fish are kept in indoor tanks using lighting, pumps, aerators and filtration equipment. Intensive pond farms, such as those typically used to farm shrimp, come with a higher footprint than extensive ponds because they use a lot of energy-intensive aeration equipment.

[Seafood Watch](#) has created the first extensive overview of the carbon footprint of seafood. Omnivorous Gilthead seabream farmed in cages have a footprint of 2.0 to 3.6 CO₂ equivalent per kilogram of fish. Farming the same fish in a land-based system can result in a footprint of up to 22.7 CO₂ equivalent per kilogram of fish. The carbon footprint of salmon is surprisingly low at 2.8 to 5.4 CO₂ equivalent per kilogram of fish. This is because salmon are mainly farmed in cages and a lot of work has been done on improving the sustainability of the feed ingredients for these carnivorous fish.

Shrimp produced in ponds have a footprint of 4.6 to 5.1 CO₂ equivalent per kilogram of shrimp, but [Seafood Watch](#) notes that the loss of mangroves that is often associated with the construction of shrimp ponds in Asia, plus the production of methane from farm waste, is rarely included in these calculations. This could enlarge the carbon footprint considerably.

Fisheries on small pelagic fish tend to have a smaller footprint than fisheries specialising in large oceanic fish like tuna or swordfish, since less fuel and effort is required per production unit. Shrimps from fisheries tend to have the highest carbon footprint as bottom trawling requires a lot of fuel, and the same applies to crabs in most cases. Fishing for small pelagic fish like sardines comes with a footprint of 0.2 to 0.9 CO₂ equivalent per kilogram of fish. Shrimp from bottom trawling on the other hand comes with a footprint 10 to 15 times of this, or 8.9 to 15.9 CO₂ equivalent per kilogram of shrimp. For more calculations and examples, you can refer to the [carbon footprint calculator](#) developed by [Seafood Watch](#).

Figure 1: The carbon footprints of various seafood products, according to calculations by [Seafood Watch](#). Each range bar represents the middle 50% of the carbon estimate.



Source: [Seafood Watch](#) (2022)

Reduce the size of your footprint

Because fishing vessels are active for long hours and often need large engines to pull their nets, their energy use makes up the largest part of the carbon footprint of wild-caught seafood. The Dutch fishing fleet is a global leader in improving the efficiency of its vessels. By adjusting the design of their nets, drag is significantly reduced, which saves fuel. A [pioneering project](#) by Ekofish Group aimed to develop the most sustainable fishing vessel in the world. They came up with ingenious solutions for energy regeneration such as charging batteries using the energy released when unspooling the nets.

If you are farming carnivorous species, you may decide to switch to herbivores, since these do not need fishmeal in their diet. You can also work on replacing fishmeal with a more sustainable alternative like insect

meal. This would especially help you to reduce your wider environmental footprint. The technology for farming insects on a large scale has only recently been commercialised. The first salmon in Europe are now being grown on [feeds with insect meal](#). Many companies are engaged in this. The best-known example is likely [Protix](#) from the Netherlands.

To reduce energy usage, use machinery with low energy consumption and find out if solar-powered options are available. Check out India based Saga Aquaculture's [solar-powered automatic feeders](#) for ponds and cages and Intech's [solar powered paddlewheel aerators](#).

Installing solar panels to power your fish farm or processing plant is another option to consider. The recent fall in the price of solar panels means that this is now a serious option. In remote areas, access to reliable power is limited and solar panels are more efficient and cheaper to run than diesel generators in most cases.

A novel idea from China is to [install waterproof solar panels over your fish ponds](#). These ponds tend to overheat in the summer, contributing to algal blooms and causing stress and mortalities in your fish. When solar panels are installed over the ponds, these reduce water temperature and evaporation. The panels are also cooled by the water that evaporates, which increases their efficiency: a win-win situation. Watch [how solar panels are used](#) for more information.

Choose processing and freezing equipment that is energy-efficient, especially when using diesel generators since these are less efficient and emit more pollution. This will not only reduce your carbon footprint but also your overhead costs.

Tips:

Take some time to explore the [carbon footprint calculator](#) developed by Seafood Watch and have a look at this handy [transport calculator](#).

Follow this [free online course](#) by FAO on the effects of climate change on fisheries, and thus on your business.

Read this article with an introduction on how to [assess the carbon footprint of aquaculture](#).

Check out this article that outlines how different feed companies and fish farmers are [reducing their carbon footprints](#).

Communicate about your efforts to reduce your carbon footprint: this is a selling point for your company.

3. Decrease the waste output of your farm

The biggest environmental impact of seafood in the aquaculture sector is typically the waste produced by fish farms. Uneaten feed, excreta and dead animals in ponds are often flushed out into public water like rivers and wetlands. In cage systems, waste ends up as sediment below the cages.

Feeds and excreta are packed with nutrients and cause a build-up of excess nutrients in the natural environment surrounding your fish ponds or cages. This process is called [eutrophication](#). Bacteria feed on these nutrients, causing oxygen levels to drop drastically and the water quality to deteriorate. Eutrophication also results in algal blooms.

Figure 2: How eutrophication is caused by fish farms as presented by [OSPAR](#)



Source: OSPAR (Third OSPAR Integrated Report on the Eutrophication Status of the OSPAR Maritime Area, 2006-2014)

Fish that are stressed or weakened by low water quality as a result of eutrophication are more likely to become sick or die. Disease is actually the biggest cause of financial losses to farmers and is often caused by inadequate waste management. It has been estimated that the shrimp farming sector in Southeast Asia alone has lost €20 billion in the past 10 years due to infectious diseases that regularly wipe out entire stocks.

Optimise your feeds and feeding systems

Feeds are the main contributor to the production of waste in aquaculture and are the main operating cost. Optimising the quality of the feeds you use and improving the feeding protocols of your company will allow you to use less feed, while your fish or shrimp will actually grow faster. It will also reduce your costs and your farm's waste output.

Try to use high-quality commercial pellet feeds that are tailored to the needs of the species that you farm. These will contain the exact nutrients that your fish or shrimp need, and have been developed to maximise digestibility, while not disintegrating in the water column. All of this helps to reduce the waste produced during and after feeding. Visit the website of feed producers like [CP](#), [Uni-President](#), [Skretting](#), [De Heus](#) and [INVE](#), which have sales offices around the globe.

These companies can also provide you with tips on how to improve your feeding practices. Improvement starts by calculating the exact feed requirements of your fish or shrimp. The [handbook for common calculations](#) can help, or use an app such as [eFishery](#) for farmers in Indonesia. The app not only helps you with feeding, but also water quality management.

To tackle the issue of sustainability in feeds and their ingredients, the Aquaculture Stewardship Council recently released a sustainability standard focusing solely on the [new feed standard](#).

Tips:

Read this article by the Global Seafood Alliance to better understand the key components in the [production of waste by fish farms](#).

Check out the [WastEst](#) digital tool to calculate the amount of waste generated by fish farms. Although the tool is currently only available for a limited number of species, it will still give you some fantastic insight into which factors are responsible for waste production on your farm.

4. Keep up-to-date with the latest scientific insights and 'go circular'

Scientists around the world are working to improve our understanding of aquaculture and fisheries and try to find better ways to produce our seafood. Incorporating some of those insights into your business can help to make your business more sustainable and efficient.

Focus on native species

When selecting suitable species for production, it is advisable to prioritise native species (species that occur

naturally in your area). Native species are better adapted to the local environment and better able to resist local pathogens (bacteria, viruses or other microorganisms that can cause disease). Native species also have a much lower negative impact on the surrounding environment if they escape. Non-native species, by contrast, often lead to serious harm if they escape. The Fish Site has published an article that discusses whether the [aquaculture of invasive and non-native species](#) is worth the risk to you and the environment.

Explore an integrated multi-trophic approach

Integrated multi-trophic aquaculture (IMTA) has recently received more attention as a sustainable, 'circular' approach to aquaculture, as opposed to monocultures. IMTA identifies and uses processes found in nature to simultaneously break down waste, produce diversified crops and provide a host of benefits for both people and the planet. The approach involves farming multiple species alongside one another, with each species playing its own role in optimising feed consumption and minimising waste output. You can read more here about [the details of IMTA](#).

In Israel, for example, one aquaculture producer farms native mullet, sea cucumbers and bivalves together [in mangrove ponds](#). Mullet and sea cucumbers specialise in keeping the bottom of the pond clean by consuming uneaten feed, while the mussels actively filter the water column and maintain water quality. The mangroves and other plants in the ponds absorb excess nutrients from the water and stabilise the environment.

Figure 3: IMTA combines the latest scientific knowledge to create a circular approach to aquaculture that minimises the environmental footprint of producing seafood



Source: Visual by the [Government of Canada](#).

Consider going offshore

A long-term option for coastal cage farms is to move operations away from the coastal zone. Coastal areas, which can include sensitive natural habitats like deltas, coral reefs and mangrove forests, are already under severe pressure. Waters that are further offshore, on the other hand, have higher flush rates and can support more fish, while providing more stable oxygen levels.

A leading provider of offshore equipment is [Innovasea](#). The owners of this company are also involved in some of the world's most pioneering offshore fish farms. Check out [Earth Ocean Farms](#) in Mexico, which farms snapper, and [Ocean Era](#) in Hawaii, which specialises in kingfish. Both of these companies are internationally recognised for their environmentally sustainable practices. A newcomer in offshore aquaculture is [Pan Ocean Aquaculture](#). This Dutch company also builds cages and is [developing a large farm in Morocco](#), tailored for export to the European market.

Offshore equipment remains rather expensive, but you should keep an eye on these developments as prices are expected to come down over the next 3-5 years, making this an attractive and sustainable option for farming fish.

Explore the use of recyclable and biodegradable packing materials

First of all, you should consider using only recycled plastic to package your seafood products. Recycled paper or sustainably produced paper is an option for the outer packaging, such as paper certified by [Forest Stewardship Council](#). Another option is to reduce your use of plastic by using ultra-thin plastic packaging materials and methods. Various high-tech methods for packaging seafood products while minimising your use of plastics are explored in this article by [Eurofish](#).

Although still at an early stage of development, progress is being made on biodegradable packaging alternatives made from seaweed. This is another trend to keep an eye on. [Sway](#) in the United States is a start-

up that makes seaweed-based, home-compostable replacements for plastic packaging. [Notpla](#) in the United Kingdom has already commercialised some sustainable packing solutions and offers a variety of packing material made from a combination of seaweeds and other plant materials.

Another interesting option that is under development is packaging materials made from shrimp skins. This novel method transforms the waste produced by shrimp processing plants into a resource for packaging: circular economics. Read more about the [processed shrimp shell technology](#), which is being developed at King Abdulla University of Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia.

Tips:

Read this article, which explains [how Brazil has used its native species](#) for an international aquaculture success story.

Follow the latest news [of Packaging Insights](#) to stay up to date about innovative packing materials for seafood.

5. Build green principles into your business

Making sure green principles are actually implemented in your company starts with creating written procedures that outline the relevant principles and procedures. Typically, you should have written procedures for different departments and production activities. It is critical that staff keep records of their daily tasks so that managers can check for compliance with procedures at any time, and checks can also be carried out by buyers or auditors.

Include written procedures for aspects like waste management, feeding, and minimising escapes and energy consumption. For fishing vessels, you may consider written procedures relating to bans on shark finning, the handling of marine mammals and sea turtles, and specific rules for crew relating to fisheries management.

It is equally important to ensure that your seafood products can be traced backwards and forwards one step in the supply chain. You should provide proper traceability training for your staff.

In Myanmar, the nation-wide [Myanmar Good Aquaculture Practices field guide](#) provides fish farmers, especially those who want to export their produce, with practical tips on incorporating green principles into their management practices. Indonesian farms have adopted a similar approach and have also published a [best practices for aquaculture management guide](#).

When rolling out green principles, it is important that:

- All procedures are written out and are can easily be verified by managers;
- All company procedures, including updates, are made available in a language and format that is easily understandable to all your employees;
- All records relating to the implementation of procedures are retained for a minimum of two years; and
- Staff training on all relevant procedures should be provided regularly.

Tip:

Learn everything about traceability in seafood using this handy [guide from ASEAN](#).

6. Get involved in improvement projects

The environmental footprint and carbon footprint of any seafood product are calculated by adding the footprint of the product at each step in the supply chain, so cooperation and coordination between different supply chain actors and stakeholders is key.

Fishery improvement projects

For products originating from fishery improvement projects (FIP) have been developed. FIPs can have different goals, but typically the aim is to improve the sustainability of a fishery and reduce its environmental impact. Other goals can include reducing the carbon footprint of a product, improving the recycling of plastic and improving management practices like record keeping and traceability.

An example of a successful FIP is the [Sustainable Tuna Partnership](#) in the Philippines, where local fishers and exporters work together with buyers and retailers from Europe like [Coop](#) in Switzerland and Dutch seafood buyer [Sea Fresh](#) to create a sustainable and fully traceable tuna fishery.

Various supply chain actors may take part in such a project – from fishers, to local traders, processors and exporters. In larger projects that target overseas markets such as those in Europe, seafood importers and retailers often also sign up. It is also in their interest to reduce the environmental impact of seafood products throughout the supply chain as this helps them to meet carbon-neutrality goals.

For you, a major advantage of joining such a project is support for your efforts to green your business. Often, funding is also pooled, with retailers and overseas buyers helping you to green your business and the seafood products you export. Sometimes the European Union is also interested in providing co-funding to such initiatives. Recently [a follow-up project](#) of the fishers and exporters in the Philippines received roughly € 1.5 million as part of an 80% co-funding initiative.

Aquaculture improvement projects

Similar Aquaculture Improvement Projects (AIP) can be initiated in the field of aquaculture. In Bangladesh, leading feed producers [Nutreco](#), [Viqon](#) and [Larive International](#) are working with local aquaculture farms to promote sustainable development in the local aquaculture sector. *“Strengthening the aquaculture sector in Bangladesh requires an increase in domestic productivity in an environmentally and socially responsible way. This can be achieved by introducing technologies developed in the Netherlands,”* said Matthias Brienens, director of Larive International.

The partnership is investing €6 million to achieve this. In Kenya, Dutch company [Lattice Aqua](#) and social enterprise The [Sustainable Trade Initiative](#) (IDH) have partnered with local fish farms to [launch](#) an Aquaculture Improvement Project to improve the productivity, profitability and sustainability of local farms.

Tips:

Find out whether there is an existing project that you can join, or talk with others about setting up your own improvement project and going green together. Prepare properly by setting concrete goals, targets and budgets. If you are unsure about where to start, check out these [different improvement projects](#) and their goals.

The [Sustainable Fisheries Partnership](#) has launched a very handy [toolkit](#) with tips on how to set up and run your own improvement project.

To find out more about what investors are looking for when investing in sustainable aquaculture read this [Investment Guide for Sustainable Aquaculture](#), which was developed by IDH with financial support from the [Walton Family Foundation](#).

7. Evaluate the risks

Going green can be a significant opportunity for your business, but it is equally important to understand and evaluate the potential downsides, and to take account of these in your plans.

Time

Implementing green principles in your business will mean an investment of time. For example, reducing the waste output of a farm may require a filtration system and additional channels between the fish ponds. Employees will need time to learn new practices and learn how to work with these new systems. Expect at least 2 to 3 years to transform your fish farm into a fully sustainable operation.

In ocean fisheries, implementing green principles tends to take even longer. Many stakeholders will be involved and changes to legislation are often required, such as proposed closed seasons, catch reductions and registration procedures. In the Philippines, the [Sustainable Tuna Partnership](#) has been supporting fishers and processors of yellowfin tuna for export to Europe. For ten years, the partnership has been working to create a truly sustainable fishery. Recently the project was [rewarded for its hard](#) work and dedication by achieving MSC certification.

It is important to see going green as a continuous process that can take years to achieve in full. Every step you take is a step in the right direction.

Money

Funding the necessary improvements to your business can be costly. Additionally, obtaining internationally recognised certification label is costly. The general idea is that you will earn these investments back by receiving higher prices for your products, being able to sell more products and increasing the efficiency and profitability of your operation. However, this is not guaranteed, particularly as more suppliers are becoming certified. In fact, certification seems to have become a means of continuing to access the European market rather than a way to charge higher prices.

Implementing sustainability measures takes time and you should always bear in mind that recouping this investment will also take time. Plan your budget accordingly and weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of green measures and certification for your business.

Legislators have hailed land-based recirculating aquaculture systems as the greenest way to farm fish, for instance. Although this may be true one day, the investment required for these systems remains high, making it critical to have a solid business plan in place. See this article from IntraFish with a long list of [companies that use these recirculating aquaculture systems](#) but have failed to profit from going green.

Tip:

Read this article from The Fish Site, which describes [the true costs of high-tech aquaculture investments](#) in relation to sustainability.

8. Stay informed about the rules

Understanding European rules and regulations with regard to environmentally responsible production and the export of seafood can be a challenge. The penalties can be significant if you inadvertently fail to follow one of these regulations and the reputational damage to your company can also be severe. This is another argument

for taking your time when making changes to your business infrastructure and procedures. Try to anticipate regulatory changes by keeping yourself informed and keeping in touch with the government agencies that regulate your business.

Egypt, for example, is the largest producer of seafood from aquaculture in Africa, but the country experienced challenges in implementing European rules and regulations on food safety and sustainability correctly. During the last [EU audit in 2021](#) it was found that the traceability of seafood products was not adequate in Egypt, and it was impossible to verify the origin of the fish. In response to this, the Egyptian Customs Authority has decided to [halt the export of all seafood products](#) to the EU until these issues are fixed.

Bans like this are a significant risk to any seafood exporter. This is why it is important to know and follow the rules and work together with other stakeholders to tackle existing issues.

Relevant rules and regulations for seafood exporters

Seafood products that are exported to the European Union need to comply with the European Food Law but there are no specific regulations on environmental sustainability. Instead, most sustainable concerns overlap with rules and regulations on food safety, animal health and disease control. For example, regulations on food safety require proper waste management and disposal for food safety reasons, and this also reduces the environmental footprint of your products.

The competent authorities in your country are responsible for ensuring that all exports are compliant with these regulations. You can read more about this process in this handy guide: [EU import conditions for seafood and other fishery products](#). For more information on this topic, also take a look at the CBI study: [What requirements must fish and seafood comply with to be allowed on the European market?](#)

Since 2014 there have been new labelling requirements that may impact on your business. You can read about these in this [pocket guide](#) to the EU's new fish and aquaculture consumer labels. If your products are organically certified, there are a number of other rules that you should adhere to. CBI has produced [a study](#) on the export of organic seafood. EU regulations on organic production exclude products that come from the fishing or hunting of wild animals. There are [specific rules](#) for livestock, processed food and wine, yeast, aquaculture and more.

European Green Deal

An important driving force of the trend towards using the carbon footprint of companies as a benchmark for their environmental performance has been the EU. In 2021, the European Green Deal was signed into law. The ultimate goal of the [European Green Deal is to overcome environmental degradation](#) and the threat of climate change. For this purpose, the EU wants to achieve the following:

- zero net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050;
- economic growth decoupled from the use of natural resources; and
- no person or place left behind.

The ultimate target is a carbon-neutral EU by 2050. By 2030, emissions need to be reduced by 55%. You can find an [introductory video](#) on the European Commission website.

A number of laws and regulations are currently being drafted to turn this vision into a reality, and there is a strong focus on energy and transport. Logically, this will have a major impact on seafood exporters like you. Some of the proposed targets that will impact seafood exporters include:

- 75% of freight transportation in Europe will have to move from roads to rail and ship;
- The use of roads for freight transportation will be taxed more heavily;
- By 2030, all packaging needs to be made from recycled materials; and
- The production of organic food should be prioritised.

This likely means that the transportation costs of imported products will rise. In addition, exporters producing seafood products that are ready to be sold to consumers will have to use recycled materials for packaging. It is also likely that the demand for sustainably produced seafood will rise; however, to be labelled as sustainable, your products will need to be certified.

Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive

In 2021 the European Parliament adopted the [Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive](#), which aims to revolutionise sustainable reporting and ties this to financial reporting requirements. Starting in 2025, this will be mandatory for all large corporations operating within the EU. In early 2022, the EU also agreed that companies will have a responsibility to [perform due diligence](#) on the products they buy and to identify and prevent adverse any effects on human rights and the environment in their own operations, subsidiaries and value chains. Both measures will impact exporters in developing countries. They will require you to operate transparent and traceable supply chains and, indirectly, require you to measure and reduce the environmental impact of your products.

Tips:

Learn more about the [requirements seafood needs to meet](#) to be allowed on the European market.

Check out the in-depth [overview of the seafood market in Europe](#).


Read the CBI study [The EU Green Deal – How will it impact my business?](#) for more details on the EU green deal.


Jonah van Beijnen and Kyra Hoevenaars at [VB Consultancy](#) conducted this study on behalf of CBI.

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