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date: June 1st, 2026
subject: Request to preserve ring fenced EMFAF funding for fisheries and aquaculture data
collection under the 2028–2034 funding framework

attachment: -

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Dear Madam Chair,

On behalf of EFARO, the European Network of Directors of the main Fisheries and Aquaculture Research Organisations in Europe, I write to urge the European Parliament, in concert with the European Commission, to reconsider the current proposal for EMFAF financing arrangements and to preserve a dedicated, ring-fenced budget line for fisheries and aquaculture data collection activities within the National and Regional Partnership Programme (NRPP) segments for 2028–2034.

Rationale and urgency

Fisheries data collection is the scientific backbone of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). Article 25 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 and the Data Collection Framework (DCF), implemented through the EU Multiannual Programme (EU-MAP), establish Member States' legal obligations to collect biological, environmental, technical and socio-economic data required for assessments of status and dynamics of aquatic living resources and their ecological, economic and social sustainable exploitation, ecosystem-based management as well as policy evaluation and implementation. This includes supporting work of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) and the tasks of the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) to inform the CFP and related environmental directives, e.g. the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

Stable, predictable and ring-fenced funding has been essential to deliver the long-term, harmonised time series and regional cooperation that underpin robust scientific advice and evidence-based management. This is evidenced by the recent evaluation of the 2013 CFP Regulation, (ref. SWD(2026) 120 final), revealing that the CFP regulation *has substantially strengthened the scientific basis and the governance framework of fisheries management, through improved data collection and scientific advice*. Through the DCF, it has effectively improved data collection and its link to scientific advice, with enhanced harmonisation through Regional Coordination Groups. The use of DCF data has also increased, signalling better accessibility and relevance for scientific advice and for research purposes, as well as for the assessment and reporting of several descriptors under the MSFD. EU funding has been critical in achieving these changes. Still, challenges remain such as uneven data coverage, quality issues, national confidentiality rules as well as expanding policy needs, all of which require further investment in research infrastructure and scientific expertise.

Removing or diluting dedicated EMFAF funding for DCF activities would create immediate and practical risks: breaks in long-standing time series; reduced coverage and comparability across sea basins and member states; weakened regional coordination through Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs); and diminished capacity to meet legal obligations. These risks are not hypothetical. Many fisheries-independent surveys and joint monitoring initiatives — for example, multi-national sea-going surveys such as the International Blue Whiting Survey and the International Ecosystem Survey in the Nordic Seas as well as other internationally coordinated activities, such as bycatch monitoring for endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species — rely on multi-annual, ring-fenced financing to align methodologies, vessels, staff and equipment across Member States.

Beyond its scientific and regulatory role, this system also underpins Europe's strategic autonomy. A robust, EU-coordinated data collection framework ensures that fisheries and aquaculture policy is informed by independent, harmonised and publicly governed data. Erosion of this capacity would risk fragmentation and increased dependence on less coordinated or external data sources, weakening the EU's ability to manage its marine resources effectively and autonomously.

Emerging needs and funding pressure

Policy developments (including the Nature Restoration Regulation, the Marine Action Plan, the Ocean Pact, the Vision 2040 for Fisheries and Aquaculture to be developed and the European Ocean Observation Initiative and expanding ecosystem-based and climate-related requirements) imply increasing demands for new types of observations, higher spatial and temporal resolution, and novel monitoring and data analyses technologies. Current budgets are already constrained. Shifting DCF activities into non-ring-fenced, general funding envelopes would reopen national budget negotiations, create uncertainty for long-term planning, and likely reduce the ability of Member States to establish and sustain the new data streams required in a coordinated and harmonised manner needed for a solid scientific advice.

The EU aquaculture sector similarly depends on robust, long-term socio-economic and environmental datasets to understand cost structures, labour dynamics, profitability and environmental services. Without dedicated funding, the evidence base needed to design proportionate support measures and effective funding instruments for aquaculture will be weakened.

Request

In light of the above, EFARO respectfully requests that the European Parliament, DG MARE and the Commission:

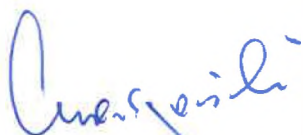
1. **Preserve a dedicated, ring-fenced financing structure for fisheries and aquaculture data collection** within the NRPP segments of EMFAF for 2028–2034.
2. **Ensure multi-annual predictability** of allocations for DCF activities to enable regional planning, research vessel upgrading and optimal utilisation, staff commitments and investments in monitoring and data analyses technologies.
3. **Maintain and strengthen support for regional coordination** (RCGs, joint surveys, ICES and Regional Fisheries Management Organisations) to safeguard harmonised methodologies and coherent time series across Member States and regional seas.
4. **Consider co-funding and transitional arrangements** to enable Member States to scale up new monitoring needs linked to emerging policy instruments without jeopardising mandatory DCF obligations.

Offer of cooperation

EFARO and its member institutes stand ready to support the European Parliament, DG MARE and the Commission in refining the EMFAF design to ensure that data collection needs are met efficiently and transparently. We can provide technical input on cost estimates, multi-annual survey planning, regional coordination mechanisms and the prioritisation of new monitoring requirements to ensure that funding is used effectively to meet both CFP and wider ocean policy objectives.

We appreciate your consideration of this request and would welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters with you and your services at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "P. Margoński".

Dr Piotr Margoński
President

Cc:

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