



TO:

Ms Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European
Commission

Ms. Roberta Metsola
President of the European
Parliament

Mr António Costa
President of the European
Council

Mr Nikos Christodoulides
President of Cyprus

Copy:

Mr Raffaele Fitto
Executive Vice-President for
Cohesion and Reforms

Mr Piotr Serafin
Commissioner for Budget,
Anti-Fraud and Public
Administration

Mr Christophe Hansen
Commissioner for Agriculture
and Food

Mr Costas Kadis
Commissioner for Fisheries
and Oceans

EU fisheries attachés

Brussels, 19 February 2026

RE: **Urgent need to strengthen EU funding for Fisheries and Aquaculture | MFF 2028-2034**

Dear President of the European Commission,

Dear President of the European Parliament,

Dear President of the European Council,

Dear Executive Vice-President,

Dear Commissioners,

We, as representative of the European fisheries and aquaculture sectors, are extremely worried that the needs of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors are not sufficiently guaranteed as the proposal of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028–2034 currently stands.

In that respect, we wish to draw your attention to the strong and convergent positions expressed by the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee. Both EU bodies have clearly underlined the need for a specific and reinforced financial framework for fisheries, including a guaranteed allocation of at least EUR 6.1 billion – as in the current MFF – adjusted for inflation, reflecting the Common Fisheries Policy's (CFP) status as an exclusive EU competence and the strategic importance of fisheries and aquaculture for food security, sustainability, competitiveness and coastal cohesion. This broad institutional alignment provides a solid basis for strengthening the Commission's proposal.

Fisheries and aquaculture as pillars of EU food security and strategic autonomy

The Commission has repeatedly underlined that food security is a core component of the Union's strategic autonomy. Fisheries and aquaculture are indispensable in this regard. They provide high-quality, low-carbon protein, support diversified supply chains and reduce dependence on imports in a global context marked by increasing geopolitical and climate-related uncertainty.

However, the current MFF 2028–2034 proposal foresees a reduction of more than 67% in the ring-fenced budget for fisheries and aquaculture compared to the current programming period. Restoring fisheries and aquaculture funding to a level that reflects proportional treatment across primary sectors would require a limited budgetary adjustment at EU level, while delivering substantial returns in terms of food security, resilience and territorial cohesion.

Competitiveness, investment and policy delivery

The Commission has consistently emphasised that competitiveness and innovation are central to the future of the European economy, including the agri-food and blue economy sectors. For fisheries and aquaculture, adequate and predictable financing is a prerequisite for investment in decarbonisation, digitalisation, selectivity, data collection, control, improving environmental performance, and innovation.

The funding level currently envisaged in the MFF 2028–2034 proposal would significantly constrain the sector's ability to respond to these expectations. It would weaken the Union's capacity to deliver on the legally binding objectives of the CFP and risk creating a growing gap between regulatory ambition and operational reality. This would ultimately undermine policy effectiveness, investor confidence and the long-term competitiveness of the sector.

A CFP equipped with appropriate financial resources is not a cost, but a strategic investment in the resilience and competitiveness of Europe's food system and maritime economy.

Governance, legal certainty and effective implementation

The Commission has also consistently highlighted the importance of simplification, legal certainty and effective governance in EU spending programmes. However, fisheries-related measures rely largely on non-binding references within the National Recovery and Resilience Plans, without assurances that sufficient resources will be allocated by Member States. Thus, the

actual proposal risks having fisheries and aquaculture compete against other more prioritised national policies (e.g. security and defence), resulting in fisheries and aquaculture not receiving the minimum required national funding, creating substantial differences between Member States and a misalignment between EU policy ambition and the funding made available at EU level.

For an EU policy that is fully harmonised and an exclusive Union competence, this approach risks fragmenting implementation and weakening policy coherence. Introducing dedicated legal provisions for fisheries and aquaculture would enhance predictability, ensure consistent delivery across Member States and reinforce the credibility of EU action in coastal and riparian regions.

Territorial cohesion and social resilience

Fisheries, aquaculture and the processing of aquatic products are integral to the economic and social fabric of many coastal, riverine and outermost regions. In several areas, they underpin a substantial share of employment and local economic activity, contributing directly to territorial cohesion and social resilience — objectives that the Commission has rightly placed at the heart of the European project.

Ensuring visible and tangible EU support for coastal communities is therefore essential to maintaining trust, stability and constructive engagement with the Union's policy objectives.

Proposed way forward

In line with the positions of the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee, and fully aligned with the Commission's priorities on food security, strategic autonomy and competitiveness, we respectfully propose the following targeted adjustments:

- Restore fairness and strategic balance in the next EU budget by increasing the minimum ring-fenced allocation for fisheries and aquaculture so that, at a minimum, it safeguards current MFF funding levels in real terms (adjusted for inflation), and by granting the sector access to the frontloading of Medium-Term Review funds. This would correct the current disproportionality, reinforce EU food security and autonomy, ensure consistency across Member States, and unlock urgent investment in competitiveness, fleet modernisation, digitalisation and generational renewal across coastal and rural regions.
- Ensure the credibility and deliverability of the Common Fisheries Policy by anchoring binding funding guarantees in the future MFF. This should include mandatory allocation of NRP resources to core CFP priorities and a protected envelope for control and data collection, preventing these obligations from crowding out investment in sustainability, innovation and resilience.

The European fisheries and aquaculture value chains remain a committed and constructive partner in delivering the Union's objectives. We are convinced that a balanced and adequately financed CFP will strengthen the EU's capacity to act strategically, competitively and sustainably in an increasingly complex global environment.

We would welcome the opportunity to engage in further dialogue with you and the relevant members of the College to contribute to a coherent, resilient and future-oriented framework.

On behalf of the European fishing and aquaculture sectors and supply chains.

Yours faithfully,



Guus Pastoor
President of Seafood Europe



Javier Garat
President of Europêche



Lara BARAZI
President of FEAP



Jean Marie Robert
President of EAPO



Juan Manuel Trujillo
ETF Fisheries