
Europêche Mission Statement

*Committed to responsible fishing, nature, science and seafood supply
now and for future generations*

Europêche is the representative body for fishers in the EU representing thousands of vessels, both artisanal and large scale, mainly fishing for direct human consumption. Europêche's core mission is to promote responsible and sustainable fishing practices that not only ensures a healthy and diverse marine environment but preserves an economically and socially sustainable fishing sector able to contribute to the growing world demand for healthy seafood.

What follows is a Europêche mission statement to form a guideline for the five years to come into how to present the EU fishing industry towards policy-makers, stakeholders and media.

Fishing is one of the oldest and main activities in many rural coastal areas mainly consisting of family-run businesses that provide healthy food, livelihoods and employment.

Thanks to the low carbon footprint of the fishing industry which is being minimised year after year (at the moment down by 40 % if compared to 1990's levels), seafood is the best choice to fight climate change. Seafood consumption is good for the people's and planet's health.

Fishers understand themselves as part of the marine environment, the sea is their workplace, and as such they depend directly on the good health of marine ecosystems. As guardians of the sea, fishers help combat marine pollution through involvement in fishing for litter schemes and smarter procurement of sustainable materials, green technologies and supplies to decarbonise our industry.

There have been many sacrifices in the fishing sector to secure healthy fish populations. In the Atlantic, fishing pressure has been reduced almost by half in the last 20 years, reaching maximum sustainable yield levels (MSY) for nearly 100% of the landings from EU-regulated stocks. As a consequence, fish stocks have been increasing significantly, reaching in only 10 years, levels 50% higher than in 2010. The European catch sector has achieved a good balance between food security and biodiversity.

Thus, in the EU, fisheries are well regulated to ensure a long-term use of renewable resources. Fishing is therefore key to the blue economy and enable a green recovery post-COVID future.

The vision for the upcoming five years will therefore be for fishers to be seen, by EU institutions as well as civil society, as part of the solution rather than the problem. As part of this new narrative, the fishing industry will aim to go hand in hand with the scientific community and meet the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 considering the contribution to food security (SDG2), health benefits of seafood (SDG3), women's access to the sector (SDG5), socio-economic development in rural coastal areas (SDG 8), innovation and digitisation (SDG9), responsible seafood production (SDG12), low carbon footprint of wild-caught fish protein (SDG 13), the sustainable use of life below water (SDG14), enhance the role of management and law enforcement (SDG16) and find global alliances (SDG17).

The core focus points of action will be to:

- 1) Communicate the success of fisheries management. The good state of the fish stocks has proven that effective management is the best tool for conservation and that policy-makers should pursue 100% fisheries management in all sea areas, in line with FAO approach, not arbitrary targets (e.g. 10% no-take MPAs);
- 2) Use the vital knowledge and experience of fishers in applying management measures as a powerful ally in the decision-making process and communication. Be rational and credible by compromising where needed, collaborating with policy makers, UN organisation, trade unions, and respected NGOs, being proactive over reactive, and offering solutions not deniers;
- 3) Bring the focus point on the social dimension of fisheries, showing the human side of an industry that cares about its people. Explain how policies are impacting fishing communities, labour and safety at sea. Communicate the attractiveness of the fishing profession to bridge the generational gap. Defend the principles of a social economy;
- 4) Portray fishers as food suppliers, who even during catastrophic events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, continued to secure daily landings of fresh seafood to our plates in challenging environments. Promote wild seafood as the 'perfect protein' and as a safe, sustainable and smart choice that keeps the planet and citizens healthy and happy. Remind consumers and policy-makers that replacing seafood with land-based protein production would cost the world far more in deforestation and biodiversity loss than fishing;
- 5) Support the EU in its sustainability leadership without losing sight of the importance of levelling the playing field between EU countries and between EU and non-EU countries by equally regulating all users of the sea. Treat EU and non-EU seafood products equally in terms of import criteria, health, labour standards and trade agreements;
- 6) Communicate the need to support our fishers' hard work and commitment to sustainability by consuming EU-produced fish, which ultimately contributes to self-sufficiency and reduces the Union market's dependence on seafood imports;
- 7) Defend the European external fishing fleet and EU fisheries agreements as the most transparent, accountable and sustainable globally contributing to effective international ocean governance and the development of coastal communities in 3rd countries, providing fish for human consumption not only to the EU but also to developing country's markets;
- 8) Call for access to traditional fishing grounds in face of the current competition over marine space claimed by emerging maritime industries (e.g. renewable energy), to sustain coastal fishing communities and their important contribution to food security;
- 9) Fight the myth around the so-called '*destructive fishing gears*' or '*monster vessels*' harming the marine environment. There are no good or bad fishing gears nor vessels, it all depends on the sustainable use, good regulation, governance, enforcement and protection of vulnerable areas and species. Uphold and promote a zero tolerance approach against IUU fishing;
- 10) Develop a high level of trust in fishing activities to underpin a social license on the actual (or perceived) sustainability performance of fishing businesses. Collectively and concertedly feed policy-deciders and media outlets with best practices and good initiatives from the sector, contribution to sustainable development (including the health and welfare of society), compliance with law, and the transparency and ethics of responsibility.