



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE/A2/BVT (2023)

Subject: Answer to the Aquaculture Advisory Council’s Recommendation “Impact of the Action Plan’s Bottom Trawling Ban on Shellfish Farming”

Dear Mr Brian Thomsen,

I would like to thank you for the recommendation issued in June by the Aquaculture Advisory Council regarding the Action Plan on Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries.

As indicated by Commissioner Sinkevičius, the Action Plan is not proposing a blanket ban on mobile bottom contacting fishing. Instead, it aims to launch an intensive dialogue with Member States and the regional groups to find ways of better protecting the seabed, with a priority for Marine Protected Areas. From the scientific evidence we have seen, in some cases and for certain areas, a phasing out of certain mobile bottom contacting gear would be the only way to effectively protect the seabed or marine habitats of special ecological value. In other areas, science indicates that changes in the activity or gears towards less damaging and innovative techniques will be sufficient to protect the seabed, sensitive habitats and species.

While the subject of the marine action plan is fishing activities, it will be for those discussions with Member States and regional groups to take into account what their priorities are for protecting the seabed and sensitive species in the context of fishing activities, as well as how this interacts with the balance of other activities in the area, also considering relevant scientific evidence in terms of the benefits for biodiversity of the activities in the MPAs.

I would like to highlight that the [Guidance document on Aquaculture and Natura2000](#) acknowledges that shellfish farming can be an instrument in nature management and conservation, and in this respect, shellfish aquaculture can find its place as an activity in the Marine Protected Areas. This document refers to the impacts and benefits of different shellfish culture methods, including bottom shellfish culture.

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I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Julia Rubeck, our Advisory Councils coordinator, via the functional mailbox MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu.

Yours sincerely,

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