

European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

Belgium

Belgium – overview

Coast, lakes and ports

Belgium's varied landscape includes 67 km of sea coast and flat coastal plains along the North Sea, a central plateau, and the rolling hills and forests of the Ardennes region in the south, where the majority of the lakes are situated. The port of Antwerp is the main commercial port and one of the busiest in Europe. The main fisheries port is Zeebrugge (which had more than 60 % of landings in 2014), followed by Ostend. The Belgian waterway network is 2 043 km long, 1 532 km of which are in regular commercial use: one example is the Albert Canal, connecting Antwerp to Liège.

Potential

The Belgian part of the North Sea is used intensively for various activities, such as fisheries, sand exploitation, shipping, tourism and wind energy. The maritime economy is important to Belgium, with the port of Antwerp being a significant driver of economic activity and job creation.

The fisheries and aquaculture sector is small, contributing less than 0.1 % to the national gross domestic product (GDP). It nevertheless plays an important part in some communities. In 2014, the Belgian fleet consisted of 80 vessels with a combined gross tonnage (GT) of 14 600, a total engine power of 46 500 kW and an average age of 27 years. The size of the Belgian fleet has decreased continuously over the years. Overall, the number of vessels decreased 19 % between 2008 and 2013.



Economic performance and employment

The revenue generated by the Belgian national fleet in 2013 was EUR 77.5 million. This comprised EUR 73.5 million of landings income and EUR 4 million of non-fishing income. The Belgian fleet's economic situation is challenging. Even with fleet segments continuing to limit energy consumption, low fish prices make it difficult to improve profitability.

According to Belgian statistics, total employment in the fisheries sector in 2014 was estimated at 541 full-time equivalents (FTEs). Employment levels have decreased gradually over time. The Belgian aquaculture sector is very small, and produces mainly rainbow trout. The aquaculture sector is estimated to employ around 60 FTEs.

In 2012, the fish processing industry in Belgium consisted of about 240 enterprises with an estimated turnover of EUR 826 million, employing around 2 500 people (2 200 FTEs).

Belgium's Operational Programme



Budget

Total (EU + national):
€68 593 257

EU contribution:
€41 746 051

The Operational Programme (OP) covers five of the six 'Union Priorities' defined in the EMFF, namely:

1. promoting environmentally sustainable, resource-efficient, innovative, competitive and knowledge-based **fisheries**;
2. fostering environmentally sustainable, resource-efficient, innovative, competitive and knowledge-based **aquaculture**;
3. fostering the implementation of the **Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)**;
4. increasing **employment and territorial cohesion** (this priority is not covered by the OP);
5. fostering **marketing and processing**;
6. fostering the implementation of the **Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP)**.



1. Fisheries

What?

The Belgian fishing fleet is nationally divided into a large-fleet segment (46 % in 2013) with a motor engine power of kW > 221, and a small-fleet segment (54 % in 2013) with a motor engine power of kW ≤ 221. In the former, beam trawlers are responsible for the most important part of annual landed revenue and employment. Sole and plaice are the two most important species, both in terms of value and volume. The total weight of landed seafood by the Belgian fleet in 2014 was 24 000 tonnes, with a landed value of EUR 81 million.

OP aim

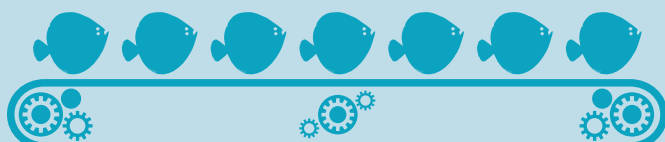
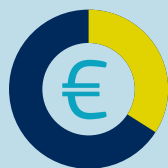
The aim of the OP is to contribute to making the fisheries sector more sustainable, both from an economic and environmental perspective. Innovation and investments will be supported in order to achieve this. Facilitating the implementation of the discard ban will be one of the most important challenges. Measures related to the protection and restoration of marine biodiversity will also receive support.

Key result

Reducing unwanted catches, increasing value and profits, maintaining existing employment, increasing fuel efficiency and removing obstacles to fish migration in rivers.

Budget

EMFF: €14 375 000
(34 % of the EMFF allocation)
National: €12 139 661



2. Aquaculture

What?

The Belgian aquaculture sector is very small, with around 60 FTEs. There is a long tradition of small-scale aquaculture in Wallonia. The main species produced is rainbow trout. In Flanders, there is relatively strong academic research on aquaculture but limited aquaculture production.

OP aim

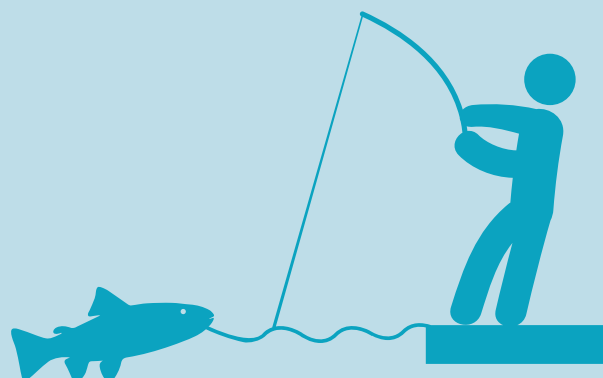
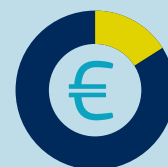
In Flanders, the aim is to transfer research and knowledge into production. In Wallonia, the focus is on continuing to develop small-scale artisanal aquaculture production.

Key objective

Belgium targets increased production and employment, but also aquaculture farms that provide environmental services and ecological production.

Budget

EMFF: €6 725 000
(16 % of the EMFF allocation)
National: €5 790 000



3. Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)



What?

Reliable data on fish stocks and effective control of fishing activities are crucial for implementing the revised CFP, particularly for implementation of the discard ban and fisheries management based on maximum sustainable yield.

OP aim

The Belgian programme supports implementation of the 2014-to-2016 data collection programme and the future programme for 2017 to 2020, which will include measures to improve the harmonisation of data collection through regional cooperation and the development of innovative data collection methods. As regards fisheries control, the programme mainly supports the development, purchase and installation of technology used for surveillance, data management and product traceability, as well as the purchase of control devices. Support will also be provided for training and exchange programmes.

Key result

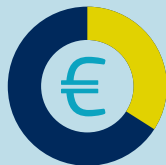
Sustainable fisheries through effective implementation of the data collection and control requirements.

Budget

EMFF: €14 244 645

(34 % of the EMFF allocation)

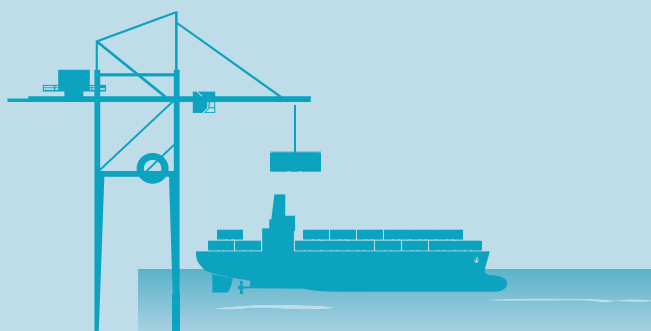
National: €2 790 611



4. Community-led local development strategies



CLLD is not included in the Belgian OP.



5. Marketing and processing



What?

In 2012, the fish processing industry in Belgium consisted of about 240 enterprises employing around 2 500 people. Most enterprises are small; these small enterprises accounted for the majority of the total turnover and provided most of the employment opportunities. The Belgian fish processing industry's activity included the production of fresh and frozen fillets, smoked fish, pickled seafood and prepared dishes. Belgium is a net importer of seafood products. Imported fish from inside the EU mainly came from the Netherlands, France, Germany, Denmark and Great Britain. Outside the EU, main import countries included China and Vietnam. Almost all exports are bound for EU Member States, predominantly France, the Netherlands, Germany and Spain.

OP aim

The aim of the Belgian EMFF programme is to strengthen the processing and marketing of fisheries and aquaculture products through cooperation and innovation. The producer organisation is instrumental in this. Increased cooperation should lead to higher added value in the different parts of the whole chain.

Key result

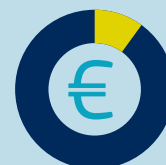
Increased value of production, and strengthening the sector's competitiveness and sustainability.

Budget

EMFF: €4 101 406

(10 % of the EMFF allocation)

National: €3 810 000



6. Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP)



What?

The North Sea is used intensively. Various activities, such as fisheries, sand exploitation, shipping, tourism and wind energy, coexist and compete. To coordinate the use of the Belgian part of the North Sea, the Belgian authorities have drawn up a marine spatial plan.

OP aim

Belgium will focus the earmarked IMP resources on meeting the Good Environmental Status 2020 objective, under the umbrella of the Marine Strategic Framework Directive (MSFD) (Directive 2008/56/EC).

Key results

Support implementation of the MSFD and Natura 2000 to achieve healthy, clean and productive seas.

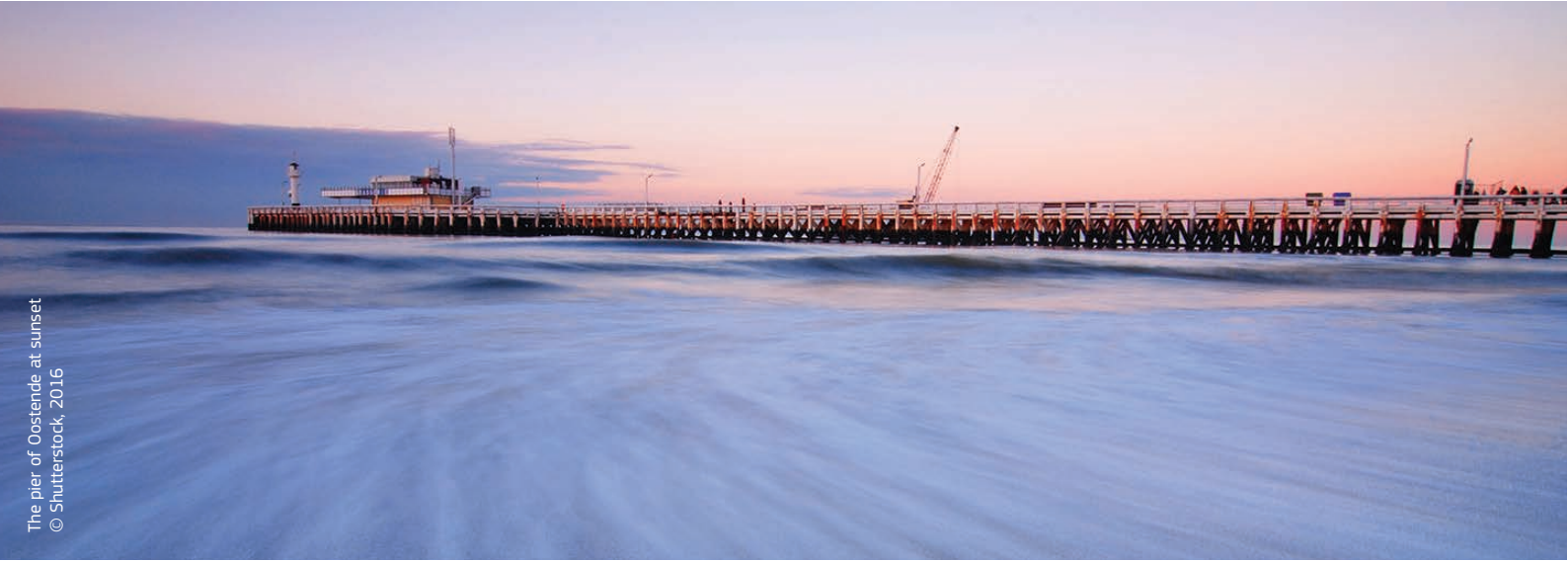
Budget

EMFF: €1 000 000

(2 % of the EMFF allocation)

National: €333 334





Simplification

Belgium will reduce the administrative costs for the potential beneficiaries through increased support, including the use of IT tools to simplify the application process.

Synergies

Cooperation amongst the different European funds in Belgium has increased at administrative level. At project level, cooperation and synergies are anticipated with European Territorial Cooperation, LIFE+ and Horizon 2020 projects.

Success stories

Man Over Board

"Man Over Board" is a system that alerts when someone goes overboard combined with a system on the bridge that shows the position of the victim so that immediate retrieval by the vessel itself is possible. The alert is sent to the official rescue channels as well. This system was installed on 74 Belgian fishing vessels (almost the entire Belgian fleet) and has thereby improved the safety and working conditions of the fishermen.

Engine replacement and new fishing gears

Economy and environment go hand in hand. The investments in new engines and new fishing gears such as the sumwing have reduced fuel consumption and thereby lowered the economic costs. At the same time reduced fuel consumption is good for the environment and the climate. The use of more modern fishing gear has also reduced the disturbance of the sea bed and increased the selectivity.

More information

● [European Commission Fisheries](#)

● [National website](#)

● [European Maritime and Fisheries Fund](#)

● [Aquaculture multiannual national plan](#)