

Programme Summary

Belgium - Programme for the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund

2021-2027 - CCI 2021BE14MFPR001

1. Programme overview

Total allocation: 68 223 171 EUR

EU contribution: 40 266 171 EUR

National contribution: 27 957 000 EUR

Belgium intends to implement EMFAF Priorities 1, 2 and 3

Priority	Specific objective	Union contribution	
		Union contribution without TA	Union contribution for TA
1. Fostering sustainable fisheries and the restoration and conservation of aquatic biological resources	1.1.1. Strengthening economically, socially and environmentally sustainable fishing activities. All operations except those supported under Articles 17 and 19	2,300,000	138,000
1. Fostering sustainable fisheries and the restoration and conservation of aquatic biological resources	1.1.2. Strengthening economically, socially and environmentally sustainable fishing activities. Operations supported under Articles 17 and 19	4,950,000	297,000
1. Fostering sustainable fisheries and the restoration and conservation of aquatic biological resources	1.2. Increasing energy efficiency and reducing CO2 emissions through the replacement or modernisation of engines of fishing vessels	300,000	18,000
1. Fostering sustainable fisheries and the restoration and conservation of aquatic biological resources	1.3. Promoting the adjustment of fishing capacity to fishing opportunities in cases of permanent cessation of fishing activities and contributing to a fair standard of living in cases of temporary cessation of fishing activities	50	3
1. Fostering sustainable fisheries and the restoration and conservation of aquatic biological resources	1.4. Fostering efficient fisheries control and enforcement, including fighting against IUU fishing, as well as reliable data for knowledge-based decision-making	12,481,353	748,881
1. Fostering sustainable fisheries and the restoration and conservation of aquatic biological resources	1.6. Contributing to the protection and restoration of aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems	2,899,200	173,952
2. Fostering sustainable aquaculture activities, and processing and marketing of fisheries and aquaculture products, thus contributing to food security in the Union	2.1. Promoting sustainable aquaculture activities, especially strengthening the competitiveness of aquaculture production, while ensuring that the activities are environmentally sustainable in the long term	6,434,219	386,053

Priority	Specific objective	Union contribution	
		Union contribution without TA	Union contribution for TA
2. Fostering sustainable aquaculture activities, and processing and marketing of fisheries and aquaculture products, thus contributing to food security in the Union	2.2. Promoting marketing, quality and added value of fisheries and aquaculture products, as well as processing of those products	6,641,000	398,460
3. Enabling a sustainable blue economy in coastal, island and inland areas, and fostering the development of fishing and aquaculture communities	3.1. Enabling a sustainable blue economy in coastal, island and inland areas, and fostering the sustainable development of fishing and aquaculture communities	1,981,132	118,868

2. Programme Summary

The Belgian EMFAF programme (*EMFAF Programme Belgium 2021 – 2027*) will cover all Priorities and Specific Objectives except Priority 4. For Specific Objective 1.3 has a symbolic allocation so it may be used for temporary cessation support as crisis measure if needed. Flanders will implement all Specific Objectives (SO) except SO 1.5; Wallonia only SO 1.6 and Priority 2, as under EMFF 2014-2020. The main weight is on Priorities 1 (61%) and 2 (34%). Contrary to the EMFF period, Flanders will reintroduce Community-led local development (CLLD) and support one Local Action Group in the coastal region; Wallonia will not participate in CLLD given the geographical dispersion and low number of aquaculture producers.

The Belgian programme is in line with the EU Green Deal, Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies. The Common Fisheries Policy objectives are also well addressed (e.g. implementation of landing obligation, support to young fishers, energy efficiency, innovation). This programme will also support reinforced fisheries control.

Belgium is keen on further digitalising its maritime sector and will support biodiversity for marine and inland aquatic species. Increasing resilience of the Belgian fishing sector - given its high dependence on the UK waters - will mostly be catered for via the Brexit Adjustment Reserve rather than EMFAF. Belgium has no small-scale coastal fisheries but intends to optimise the potential of its recreational fisheries for the benefit of the coastal region (CLLD).

The main objectives of the programme are to support the efforts to maintain an efficient and sustainable fisheries sector rooted in the Belgian economic reality, to safeguard the conditions for locally-anchored primary production, to stimulate modernisation and innovation, and to address environmental concerns.

Within the above objectives Belgium aims to support the production of domestic fish and to increase environmental awareness throughout the production and consumption chain. The programme will continue supporting heavily research and innovation, building on successful experience in the 2014-2020 programming period.

Improving the protection of the environment at the same time as the resilience of the sector is a key objective of the Belgian programme as sustainable use of fish stocks and good environmental status are a prerequisite for successful fisheries. As Belgium has already identified 38% of its part of the North Sea as Marine Protected Area (MPA) and thereby exceeds the 30% target of the Biodiversity Strategy, a further increase is not envisaged but the programme will focus on activities to maintain and improve the quality of the current zones. EMFAF will support also the removal of lost fishing gear and marine litter.

In the Walloon part of the programme, apart from support to the aquaculture sector, investments will continue to optimise the possibilities to provide free passage of migratory fish species currently often blocked by human-built infrastructures in rivers.

The Belgian authorities have included a provision in the programme that allows them to activate a crisis support mechanism in the case of serious market disruption.

All four Horizontal Enabling Conditions are considered fulfilled for the EMFAF programme.

Contribution to EU horizontal priorities:

Resilience: Being faced with simultaneous fundamental challenges (Covid, Brexit, climate change, decreasing fish stocks) with mostly negative impact on the fisheries sector, the programme seeks to combine many different actions to maintain employment and supply to the sector. Thus, on-board work and living conditions will be improved, training will be supported both for current fishers and to ensure generational change, operating costs can be reduced by the use of fuel-saving techniques. Also, forms of income diversification will be stimulated, and, in case of future need, a crisis support mechanism can be activated. In order to overcome the short-term consequences of Brexit, Belgium will mostly use Brexit Adjustment Reserve (BAR) resources.

In order to underpin the local elements of the entire value chain from fish to plate, the programme will support actions for each of them: vessel owners and fishers, monitoring the aquatic situation, ensuring an efficient and healthy food supply, processing and marketing to obtain high value products also for local consumption - where possible - with a local link (CLLD).

In order to increase the resilience of the Walloon aquaculture sector, which specialises in trout production, the diversification of species that are more competitive against imports or more adapted to the challenges of climate change will be supported.

Green transition: The green transition is fully embedded in the key ambitions of the programme (support to the CFP, resilience, digital transition). Belgium will support the further greening of all aspects of its fisheries related sectors in many aspects and ways. This goes from more passive or less-bottom-disturbing fishing techniques, over digital assistance to fishers to make more energy-efficient fishing plans, installation of energy-efficient engines and investments on board to promote animal welfare, awareness raising about marine waste (on board and on processing on the shore).

In aquaculture also a wide range of actions will be supported e.g. moving towards using renewable energy, reducing water consumption in production, processing and rainwater storage, improving waste water quality, avoiding environmental pollution and toxic algal blooms, promotion of organic production.

As in previous programme periods, the small Walloon part of the programme will focus to an important extent on restoring the ecological continuity of its rivers, notably by reducing or by-passing obstacles, thus improving the migration of eel and other migratory species.

The programme will also support research, monitoring and management as well as operational activities (including pilot projects) that contribute to the protection, restoration and/or better management of sites and species of importance for the marine environment and biodiversity, with a particular focus on the Marine Protected Areas.

Finally, also the processing sector will get support to green its production methods in order to reduce environmental impact.

Digital transition: The Belgian programme embraces the opportunities of digitalisation in order to increase both economic and environmental sustainability and to be resilient to external shocks. The programme provides for the development of advanced digital tools in many aspects of fisheries including rolling-out and training (digitalisation at sea, control and enforcement tasks, data-collection and processing), aquaculture (remote monitoring, business management, logistics management) and processing (supply) and marketing (online sales/auctioning systems).

Added value of public investment: Belgium intends to make a wider use of simplified cost options, which will facilitate access to the programme and reduce administrative burden on applicants and beneficiaries.

Partnership Agreement (PA)

The Belgian Partnership Agreement for the period 2021-2027 was adopted on 14 December 2022.