



Event Summary
Sustainable Aquatic Food Systems -
Food security and nutrition within planetary boundaries
10th December 2023
A COP28 Nordic Food Systems Takeover event, Nordic pavilion

Opening today's discussion, **Ms. Anita Utheim Iversen**, Head of Global Action Network and Specialist Director at the Norwegian Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries, set the scene regarding the event's theme on sustainable food systems, underlining how aquatic food provides key opportunities for food security and nutrition within planetary boundaries.

Mr. Syver Zachariassen, Political Advisor to the Norwegian Minister of International Development **Ms. Anne Beathe Tvinnereim**, delivered opening remark on the Ministers behalf. The Minister underlined that aquatic food is often overlooked in the discourse, but its importance in ensuring food security is paramount. Food security, according to the Minister, is more than food – it's also about the right food, and food from the ocean has a lot of benefits, given its low carbon footprint, high protein- and essential nutrients' value. As Norway is prioritizing action for food security, the Minister stressed the need for sustainable harvesting, but also production and consumption. All in all, it is important to keep in mind that the ocean offers a great solution to climate change, as the role of food coming from the ocean is critical.

Ms. Karen Ellemann, Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers, moved on to underline that the ocean also provides a big part of the oxygen that we breathe, rich biodiversity, livelihoods for people, moreover, is part of climate solutions. Developments such as climate change, pollution, and over-exploitation of resources, can however pose big challenges for the ocean, so it is our mission to ensure a healthy ocean, which can provide carbon capture and storage, renewable energy, and food. As a result, it is imperative to boost our oceans' resilience and long-term sustainability, while at the same promoting healthy and sustainable diets. Cooperation among stakeholders across sectors, as well as across regions, can play a key role towards this vision. Last but not least, as referred in the new publication of the Nordic Council of Ministers' ['Nordic Nutrition Recommendations'](#), food from the ocean is nutritious (given its Omega-3s and nutrients), can be better for the climate (when sustainably produced), and represents the world's most traded commodity, so its potential is key.

Mr. Christopher Adjei, Youth Representative and Advocate for Aquatic Foods at the International Forestry Students' Association moved on to provide some real-life examples coming from his coastal community. During his intervention, he portrayed the youth's deep commitment for natural resources' sustainable management, highlighting that young people play a big role in understanding the urgency of action, as the future is linked with today's practices. Rising sea levels and ocean acidification call for efforts in coastal management for healthy ecosystems. Given their significance in marine ecosystems and biodiversity, it is very important to maintain healthy fish stocks as a sustainable food source, since the global demand for seafood continues to rise, too. In this context, sustainable fisheries and responsible aquaculture are vital for our future livelihoods; all in all, sustainable aquatic food offers plenty solutions for food security and nutrition, action for our climate and environmental sustainability.

During the panel discussion moderated by **Ms. Shakuntala Thilsted**, Director for Nutrition, Health and Food Security Impact Area Platform, CGIAR, and World Food Prize Laureate for 2021, invited a set of additional speakers to reflect on important steps which are required to unlock the potential of sustainable aquatic food systems.

Mr. Rune Blomhoff, Leader of the Nordic Nutritional Recommendations' Committee and Professor at the University of Oslo, mentioned that scientific evidence needs to be at the basis of such discussions, referring to the health and environmental effects of consumption. While the lack of data is a key issue to be resolved, the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations offer important evidence in this space, underlining the positive benefits of fish for our nutrition and health. The environmental impact of fisheries is also worth addressing, as its greenhouse gas emissions are lower than other animal production activities on land – at the same time, challenges i.e., overfishing, by-catch and bottom trawling have effects on biodiversity that need to be considered.

Representing the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), **Ms. Xuechan Ma** connected the dots mentioning that food security is the core mandate of FAO. In 2022, there is unfortunately still 735,000,000 people struggling with hunger, and more than 3,000,000,000 people who cannot afford a healthy diet. As presented earlier in the discussion, Ms. Ma referred to aquatic food as a powerful solution given its low carbon footprint and significant growth potential, mentioning that its consumption has been increasing twice the rate of population growth and that aquatic food is expected to contribute a bigger portion to future food baskets. Furthermore, Ms. Ma informed the audience that FAO is implementing the Blue Transformation initiative, which has three core objectives: to sustainably intensify and expand aquaculture as an essential mechanism to adapt to climate change; to ensure the effective management of 100% of fishery resources; and to develop and upgrade aquatic food value chains. Summing up her remarks, Ms. Ma quoted that “aquatic food is a climate action, and a food security action”.

Finally, **Ms. Hilde Talseth**, CEO of Norsk Kylling AS, added to the discussion that we need to produce healthy food with a low carbon footprint at a cost which the consumers can afford. “We have no other choice; we must be the change”; providing some examples from Norsk Kylling’s journey of transformation, Ms. Talseth underlined that technology is very important to ensure efficiency. Meanwhile, the private sector has a huge potential of delivering change, moreover a responsibility to act on a plethora of issues, including animal welfare. Finally, during her speech, Ms. Talseth stressed the meaning of cross-sectoral collaboration, but also the key added value of working in close collaboration with all stakeholders, including NGOs, businesses, R&D, academia and more.