

**On Monday, 9th June 2025, the side event "The Ocean We Depend On – Strengthening Food Security and Nutrition through Aquatic Foods" was held at the UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France.**

Co-hosted by Norway, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Institute of Marine Research, Global Action Network for Sustainable Food from the Oceans and Inland Waters for Food Security and Nutrition, the Nordic Council of Ministers, and the Blue Justice initiative, the event highlighted the critical role of aquatic food systems in achieving global food security and nutrition. It also emphasized the need for stronger international cooperation, science-based policies, and inclusive governance. More than 200 participants joined us on board the Statsraad Lehmkuhl, with nearly as many following the event virtually.

**From this event, we bring the following summary and key messages:**

It was highlighted that global and regional collaboration—through initiatives like the EAF-Nansen Programme, the Global Action Network, the Blue Justice Initiative, and regional bodies such as the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Benguela Current Convention, and other fisheries cooperations—are vital for combatting illegal fishing, strengthening ocean governance, ensuring the sustainable management of shared marine resources, and to ensure food security and nutrition.

**Thus, key takeaway 1: International and regional cooperation is essential.**

Moreover, it was underscored that access to reliable, localized, and science-based data—including on fish stocks, climate impacts, contaminants and nutritional value—is crucial for informed decision-making, sustainable resource managing and improved food security

**Thus, key takeaway 2: Science and evidence-based policy are fundamental to sustainable ocean governance and aquatic food systems.**

In addition, we learned that investing in the skills and knowledge of scientists, policymakers, and communities—especially youth and women—enhances resilience, improve fisheries management, and promotes inclusive ocean governance. Human capacity development is a foundational pillar of sustainable food systems.

**Thus, key takeaway 3: Capacity building and inclusion are key to long-term sustainability.**

Finally, it was stressed that aquatic foods, particularly small fish species, are rich in essential nutrients and critical for public health. Their potential is often overlooked. To fully harness their benefits, aquatic foods should be better integrated into nutrition policies, dietary guidelines, and food systems - especially in regions where seafood consumption is low and malnutrition remains a challenge.

**Thus, key takeaway 4: The role of aquatic foods in nutrition and food security must be recognized and strengthened.**