

Event Summary

11th Our Ocean Conference, Mombasa (Kenya) | 17 June 2026

Data in support of Food Security and Nutrition – Aquatic Foods for Resilient Food Systems

Aquatic foods are crucial for millions around the globe. They provide livelihoods for both coastal and inland communities and make up a large part of peoples' diets in several parts of the world. They contribute to trade, employment, cultural identity, public health, food security and climate resilience across regions, economies and scales.

Yet the way aquatic foods are often measured and recognised does not capture this full contribution. Fisheries and aquaculture are frequently assessed through production and economic value, while their nutritional value, role in healthy diets, contribution to local development and importance for resilient food systems remain less visible in policy frameworks and investment decisions.

At the 11th Our Ocean Conference in Mombasa, Kenya, the Global Action Network for Sustainable Food from the Oceans and Inland Waters for Food Security and Nutrition – led by Norway, together with several partners¹, shed light on this gap between the full value of aquatic foods and the way that value is currently captured.

Bringing together participants from governments, UN agencies, research institutions, regional organisations, development partners, the private sector, young professionals and voices from Africa and beyond, discussions explored how stronger food composition data, local evidence, regional cooperation and science-policy links can help make aquatic foods more visible and actionable in food security and nutrition policies.

Key takeaway 1: Aquatic foods must be systematically recognised and valued for their nutritional contributions

Discussions underlined the importance of recognising the nutritional value of aquatic foods across regions and value chains. This includes not only 'high-value' commercial species, but also small fish, shellfish, seaweed and other aquatic foods that are frequently locally consumed and often nutrient-dense.

The [FAO's State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture \(SOFIA\) 2026](#) report was highlighted as evidence of a broader shift in how fisheries and aquaculture are assessed. Alongside production, trade and economic value, the report showcases nutritional value added across regions and value chains, an important step towards measuring aquatic foods by the benefits they deliver to people.

¹ Angola, Brazil, Tanzania, European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) / The EAF Nansen Programme, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI), Institute of Marine Research, Norway (IMR), Mauritius Oceanography Institute (MOI), Tanzania Fisheries Research Institute (TAFIRI), University of Bergen, University of Pretoria and Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA)

Key takeaway 2: Nutrition data must be collected and used for decision-making

Speakers highlighted that persistent gaps in nutrient, contaminant and food safety data continue to limit the ability of policymakers to fully account for the contribution of aquatic foods to food security and nutrition. However, it was emphasised that data generation is not an end in itself. Data must be transformed into knowledge, and knowledge must inform decisions. This requires investment not only in data collection, but also in interoperability of systems, analysis, dissemination and accessibility.

A practical step in this direction was the launch of a regional African working group on food composition data under the Global Action Network. The working group will improve regional data collaboration, support evidence-based fisheries governance, strengthen laboratory capacity, advance open-access data platforms and promote nutrition-sensitive fisheries policies.

Key takeaway 3: Aquatic food systems need stronger policy integration and investment readiness

The event showcased that aquatic food systems often cut across policy areas: fisheries, aquaculture, health, environment, trade and development cooperation. This can lead to fragmented governance, unclear responsibilities and missed opportunities for investment.

Aiming to overcome these barriers, the event saw the launch of a new initiative² that will develop a State of Play of aquatic food systems in select African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and draft practical recommendations to support stronger integration of aquatic food systems across national and regional policy frameworks.

Key takeaway 4: Local innovation can turn aquatic foods into accessible nutrition

Practical examples showed how aquatic foods can be used to improve nutrition in ways that are affordable, culturally acceptable and locally relevant. Examples included fish powder used in school meals, nutrient-dense fish-based products, and fish waste used as organic fertiliser. These examples illustrated how aquatic foods can support nutrition while also creating value addition opportunities for local enterprises, small-scale operators, women and youth.

In conclusion

The event positioned aquatic foods as a core part of food security, nutrition and public health. It moved beyond broad recognition of the importance of aquatic foods and focused on what is needed for implementation: better food composition data, interoperable data-sharing mechanism and regional coordination to name a few. The launch of the regional African working group on food composition data and the new ACP-focused initiative provide two concrete mechanisms for carrying this agenda forward.

² “Advancing Aquatic Foods as a Driver of Food Security and Nutrition in ACP Countries”, developed by EBCD and endorsed by the Global Action Network