

EU4Algae

a collaborative European stakeholders forum on algae

EU4Algae in Rome

12 December 2022

On 12 December morning, EU4Algae held its first **presential meeting with the consortium members and the Advisory Board**. The aim was to provide the Advisory Board a summary of the EU4Algae first year's achievements and to discuss and brainstorm on upcoming activities. Adrien Vincent (Systemiq) provided an **overview of the EU4Algae objectives and structure** within three Work-Packages' (WP): WP1 - Establish, manage, coordinate, and facilitate the European algae stakeholders' forum, WP2 - Ensuring continuity of EU4Algae stakeholders forum, and WP3 - To support bringing more algae species to the EU market either as traditional or novel food, or as food supplements.

Jasper Havermans (EurA) presented the **EU4Algae Communication Strategy**, which includes outreach to stakeholders and forum members' engagement, as well as consumer engagement. The plan is structured in three strategies, running continuously throughout the project. Phase I was mainly implemented from M1 to M6, comprising the creation of the platform and the onboarding of algae stakeholders. Phase II started in M6 and will be over on M18, focusing on the general promotion and content to engage the members. The next steps are the migration of the Maritime Forum platform, a collaboration with Taste the Ocean-campaign on algae, and further content to engage members and general audience.

Working-Groups (WG) highlights by facilitators

The aim of the WGs is to ensure demand-driven implementation of activities and **assure medium to long-term commitment of participants**. The WGs have been our **main tool for interaction with the stakeholders**. The facilitators have provided the main objectives of their respective WG, shared their impressions about the meetings' dynamics and reflected on how it contributes to the implementation of the EU Algae Initiative. After, there was a Q&A session with Advisory Board members and the need to make clear the outcomes and work being developed under each WG was remarked. The **Action Plans**, which were prepared and are being reviewed, will deliver policy recommendations, besides all the knowledge sharing within different WGs, including licensing toolkits, roadmaps for innovators, position papers, amongst other outcomes.

Algae Initiative by Delilah Al Khudhairy, Director of DG MARE for Maritime Policy and Blue Economy

The Director for Maritime Policy and Blue Economy of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE), Ms. Delilah Al Khudhairy, presented the **EU Algae Initiative**, highlighting the links to several EU initiatives, such as Farm-to-Fork, the Sustainable Blue Economy Strategy, the Strategic Guidelines for Sustainable EU Aquaculture, and the overarching EU Green Deal strategy. In this sense, the EU algae industry can become a green flagship and a source of inspiration for other industries to become more regenerative, innovative and socially inclusive, with positive impacts notably in coastal communities. Moreover, the Director provided an overview on the status of the seaweed industry in Europe, which is currently rather focused on harvesting seaweed from the wild rather than cultivating it in aquaculture facilities. Despite its current marginal share in the global seaweed

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market, Europe is already a top importer of seaweed products, which shows a strong demand for seaweed products.

Still, algae and seaweed aquaculture are subject to multiple regulatory texts, and the sector would benefit from a more coherent approach. In this direction, the Commission has launched several algae related calls, business support mechanisms, and several related studies. More recently, on 15 November, the Commission adopted a cross-cutting **EU Algae Initiative with 23 actions, grouped in four focus areas, complementary to the EU4Algae tasks**: improving the governance framework; supporting the business environment; green labelling and procurement; raising awareness and acceptance through communication campaigns; closing research, innovation, data, and knowledge gaps. EU4Algae will play an active role in making the EU Algae Initiative a success story. So, the Commission will continue to work hand in hand with the EU4Algae and other relevant stakeholders to let the EU Algae sector thrive.

Roundtable discussion with Advisory Board

In the last part of our morning session a roundtable discussion with the Advisory Board members took place, where they provided their assessment in terms of Forum structure, potential and challenges, and how they can contribute with their expertise on the EU4Algae activities. Main highlights from the discussions included the relevance of novel food approvals, the importance of the **bottom-up approach** within the Forum, the need to **make sure the WGs are not overlapping** in terms of outcomes and how this be **further streamlined**. The importance of focusing on **young entrepreneurs** as subject to WG7 was also highlighted. Another point raised was the **need for incentives**, in comparison, for instance, to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Producer organisations are specifically mentioned in the EU's strategic aquaculture guidelines. Besides, the need to stimulate the **inclusion of algae under MS Marine Spatial Planning (MSP)** was raised. There are currently two projects working with Member States to include algae in their MSP, and this is also being dealt with under the MSP Assistance Mechanism. Moreover, the **continuity of the forum** was brought-up and the WP2 was referred, which has it as the main objective.

Afternoon session

In the opening of the afternoon session, we counted 45 participants live and 100 participants following remotely in Zoom. Adrien Vincent provided the participants an overview of the EU4Algae structure and activities. Maris Stulgis represented the European Commission's DG Mare, highlighting the importance of the EU Algae Initiative, and Charlotte Jagot represented the European Climate Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA), which hosted in the morning a parallel workshop. Jean Paul Cadoret, President of the European Algae Biomass Association (EABA), expressed his contentment to see how over the years the algae sector has become more united, and referred to the AlgaEurope Conference.

Legislation and Regulation – Presentation, by Vineta Goba (Technopolis)

The presentation focused on some results of the study aimed at improving **legislation and regulatory framework**, under the EU4Algae tasks. The study explored existing legislation and governance frameworks supporting sustainable and regenerative algae production and facilitating the market uptake of algae products. The methodology included a desk study which identified 33 EU regulations that are the

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most relevant according to discussions with EU4Algae stakeholders. A summary of challenges related to algae for food, organic legislation, contaminants, and allocation of space.

Besides, **preliminary findings and preconditions for development were presented**. EU directives set common objectives for all Member States (MS), but states may decide how to reach the goals, and put in place stricter requirements. Thus, the implementation/enforcement of Directives led to substantial discrepancies between Member States. The recent developments of the EC communication on algae (released on November 15, 2022) were also remarked, on which the Commission calls on the Member States to simplify national licensing procedures and governance for algae cultivation.

One of the **conclusions** was that current EU legislative and regulatory framework, as well as national implementation in its current shape, is not effective and is too restrictive for algae entrepreneurs (it can take up to 5 years to get a license to operate, limited space for development, too large burden is placed on producers to prove product safety and compliance, etc.). In this sense, some of the proposed solutions include one-stop shop for algae processing & algae products; enforce regulations for imported algae products to adhere to EU production and application rules; ensure sufficient space for algae in the terrestrial & marine spatial plans; make specific regulations more adherent to requirements of the algae sector; and provide incentive measures for the algae sector.

Finally, some **good practices examples were presented**, as the Seaweed Cultivation Policy Statement from the Scottish government; the Ocean Harvest organization from Denmark; and the sector's legislative landscape in France, with well-defined responsibilities and streamlined application procedure, as well as Brittany's regional innovation strategy, which has specific algae/IMTA-related objective of financing R&D projects for the development of innovative integrated aquaculture technologies towards zero waste and alternative sources of nutrition.

EU4Algae overview of the collection of relevant EU algae projects, by Efthalia Arvaniti (s.Pro)

Efthalia Arvaniti presented an **overview of the collection of EU algae projects**, as part of the EU4Algae activities led by S.Pro. They have identified, collected, and mapped international projects funded by different EU programmes. As the algae industry is a constantly changing landscape, this must be constantly updated. The presented report was intended as a **snapshot of the algae industry in its current state** and the focus was on the most relevant projects started in 2021. The report has 400 companies, 200 business support organisations, 750 projects and 100+ resources, tools, associations, publications, platforms & initiatives identified.

The methodology included Desk Research (Keyword Searches). An interesting finding was a clear increase in the number of EU algae funded projects from FPs to Horizon 2020, with a budget of around 80b€. 84% of the funded projects are microalgae. The study also presented an analysis of Accelerators & Business Support Organizations (BSOs) in which a Gap Analysis of European Accelerator services on F6S platform has shown that only 1% are related to biochemistry, within a survey of 115 European accelerators with results from early November 2022.

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CINEA-EMFF/EMFAF algae projects Workshop outcomes, by Alessandro Pititto

The European Climate Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency CINEA held a **Workshop on algae and blue bioeconomy** on 12 December morning with EMFF (Workshop on algae and blue bioeconomy) funded projects. Alessandro Pititto, from the Synergies & Clustering team, shared the main results of the workshop. The workshop was dedicated to answer the following questions: Q1: How to build a sustainable & scalable market; Q2: How to structure the right model between raw material producers, technology providers and industry; Q3: What can the EC do to address current research/technology gaps and to foster synergies between project beneficiaries; and Q4: How to increase consumer awareness? Creating a demand for marine bio-based products.

Regarding EC contribution, according to the projects' participants, more investment was indicated as welcome, as well as the open consultations to define Horizon Europe next priorities, and the Novel Food Regulation. Likewise, the importance of reducing burden for innovations and to have "capitalization calls" for beneficiaries of different projects to get together and scale up were also indicated.

Wrap-up & closing remarks

Maris Stulgis provided the wrap-up words of the afternoon session. The event focused mainly on the following tasks of EU4Algae: : **Improving governance and the regulatory framework, improving the business environment and accelerating research, knowledge, innovation and development.** Legislation results should be more focused on real time conditions on improvements of the regulatory landscape. Regarding the collection of EU algae projects, the main idea was to gather results from different databases to have a clear picture of what was done and already exists. The Algae sector has the potential to go beyond the sustainability , and the focus should be put in **regeneration**, as algae can provide good perspectives to the sector to make business out of a production that contributes to regeneration, with high added value products.

The event ended with the message that the EU4Algae is your Forum is the space to come together and discuss challenges and propose innovative solutions and to support the implementation of the EU Alga Initiative.