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Further Reading: The full report is available to download here: http://mosesproject.eu/ban/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/ONIA_Aquaculture_v3.pdf

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Realising sustainable 'Blue Growth' pathways for AQ

Globally, aquaculture (AQ) production is rising rapidly and is being driven by an increasing demand for global food security and economic growth. This growth however must be in line with sustainable development standards, a task that both governments and businesses must undertake. As part of the MOSES project CIIMAR used Portugal's Centro region AQ sector as a case study to apply the Transition Management Approach, where drivers and barriers that affect the current management regime towards or against sustainable blue growth were identified and actions to overcome the barriers were suggested. The collection of information was done from scientific and policy publications and statistical datasets and by interviewing key actors of the sector such as policy makers, companies, clusters, consultants, academia and associations.

Research Findings

The most important drivers likely to impact the sustainable growth profile of AQ in the area are the high demand for fish products by the Portuguese; the existence of EU and national or local funding mechanisms requiring more flexible application criteria; better quality of local vs imported products which can justify higher prices and branding; the growing demand for delicatessen products such as organic seaweed, organic clams and locally produced oysters and corvine, and; the increased spending for research on feeding and the impacts of introducing new species. The most pressing obstacles are the low price of imported AQ products that compete with local production; the unproportioned allocation of funding; the difficulty for newcomers to enter the sector; the lack of promotion of AQ products to the consumers; the existence of more than one AQ planning frameworks; the lack of encouragement of collaboration and communication between key actors, and; the low activity/support of associations for specific types of AQ

Policy implications

AQ sector in the Centro Region shows good potential to deliver local, national and regional (Atlantic Area) objectives ensure a faster transition towards sustainable Blue Growth. However, key priorities must be further addressed. There include: a) attraction of more developers by further simplifying the licensing processes; b) facilitation of the access to the space and water by developing and implementing integrated marine spatial plans, and; c) reinforcement of competitiveness, by: increasing and diversifying the production and supply of new products; encouraging greater investment in production methods that can ensure higher food safety standards; promoting additional research and planning for offshore AQ; improving further the effectiveness of AQ associations in order to better support investors and producers, and; encouraging more effective collaboration between key actors, with strongly interlinked interests in the blue economy that work across the sector at the local, national, and regional level.