



Proposal for targeted amendments to the EMFAF Regulation to facilitate a fair and sustainable energy transition of the fishing sector

Access to financing is a critical enabler of the energy transition, and this is especially true for the small-scale coastal fishing (SSCF) sector. However, the current European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (**EMFAF**) **currently does not reflect the realities of the energy transition**, blocking any effective progress in this field.

On the other hand, despite in recital 33 of the EMFAF explicitly mentions “*EMFAF should therefore give SSCF operators preferential treatment*”, and provisions for a maximum 100% aid intensity rate were available for some eligible options, in reality the body of the text adopts a one-size-fits-all approach that **fails to reflect the specific characteristics, needs and challenges of small-scale fisheries**. Also, these funds have not been effectively accessible for the small-scale sector. As a result, until now, existing support mechanisms have favoured larger and better-resourced operators, and SSF received minimal or no support, despite representing 75% of the EU fishing fleet.

To revert all this, **it is necessary to amend the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)**. Taking into account that the **available public funds are limited, there is a need for an optimal use of funds in terms of environmental and social justice**. In this sense, prioritising for the small-scale fishing sector matches 2 main conditions:

a) Prioritise support to the sector that needs it the most and ensuring a level-playing field

Small-scale fishing (SSF) is at a critical crossroads and facing an existential crisis. An aging fleet requires urgent modernisation and an aging fishing population urgently requires generational renewal. With the average age in many fishing communities being over 50, generational renewal and diversification of activities remain a challenge. The future for small-scale fishing is full of uncertainties, but what is clear, whatever the future holds, sectoral support is urgently needed to catalyse a just transition towards a modern, low impact, decarbonised, prosperous sector.

Overfishing, combined with pollution and climate change impacts are the cause of an increasing scarcity of commercial fish in inshore waters. This combined with a high dependence on fossil fuels, volatile prices and a general increase in the cost of living is making small-scale fishing increasingly non-viable. STECF data highlight that the value of landings in the EU for the SSF shows distinct downward trends in several regions over the period 2018 to 2022, of between 30 and 35%. Over this period, SSF catch values have declined by over 35% in the Baltic region; in the Black Sea, values decreased by half over the same period. In the Mediterranean, decreases of 30% have been observed. The North Sea and Eastern Arctic experienced similar downward trends of 34% by value. Urgent targeted sectoral support is needed now to modernise the SSF fleet, enable the energy transition, and secure generational renewal.

The difficult situation the small-scale fishing sector is going through and the associated lack of possible investment, means that, unlike larger-scale operators and companies, without targeted and accessible

public financial support, the transition to low-emission technologies and climate-friendly fishing practices will remain out of reach for small-scale operators, leaving the SSCF fleet segment behind. Therefore, prioritising public funding for the needs and realities of the small-scale fleet (ring-fenced, meaningful and tailored to their specificities) is essential to ensure a just transition.

Prioritising support for small-scale fisheries is also essential to achieve a level playing field. Historically, this segment has received limited access to fishing opportunities and sectoral support, while policies have often favoured large-scale, high-volume operations. This has contributed to a concentration of fishing capital and influence in fewer hands. Targeted EMFAF support can help rebalance this situation by favouring low-impact fishing practices and ensuring that the benefits of the energy transition are shared more equitably across the sector.

b) Prioritise support to the sector with lower impact in the environment, lower carbon footprint and stronger socio-economic contribution to coastal areas

Small-scale fleets already represent the most environmentally responsible segment of the sector, generally operating with lower carbon emissions and causing less environmental damage than large-scale, high-impact fishing operations. Supporting their energy transition, therefore, represents a highly effective pathway to achieving the climate and environmental objectives of the EU Green Deal for 2030 and 2050, rewarding and incentivising low impact fishing.

Small-scale fisheries are also a cornerstone of the European fishing economy and of coastal communities. They represent more than 70% of the European vessel fleet and provide around half of all fishing-related jobs. Investments in the decarbonisation of this very significant segment of the whole fleet can therefore have a strong social impact, acting as a powerful social enabler, not just accelerating energy transition technological progress but also improving working conditions, enhancing the attractiveness of the profession, and helping to attract young people to the sector at a time when generational renewal is urgently needed.

Investing in the energy transition of small-scale fisheries also contributes directly to the resilience of coastal and island communities. In many regions, small-scale fishing remains one of the few viable economic activities, supporting local supply chains, cultural heritage and food security. Supporting their transition therefore strengthens the social and economic fabric of these communities while advancing the EU's climate objectives.

There is a need to prevent harmful subsidies

How subsidies are designed defines whether they advance or undermine climate, nature, and equity. In this sense, any reform of the current EMFAF, even if it seems to be in the name of a good environmental cause such as the Energy Transition, needs to look into potential hidden costs and side effects, avoid supporting overcapacity and overfishing through ambivalent measures.

In this case, for example, supporting new vessels built that use destructive fishing, such as vessels using towed gear, should be prevented. Any decarbonisation support should be at least conditional to the transition away from destructive fishing practices as well.

There is a need to make the support really accessible to the SSCF sector

At the same time, structural barriers currently prevent many small-scale fishers from accessing available financial support. Excessive administrative requirements often act as a significant gatekeeper, effectively excluding small operators from funding opportunities. In addition, many fishers lack the technical guidance and administrative assistance required to navigate complex subsidy applications.

Addressing these shortcomings requires simplifying administrative procedures, providing dedicated technical support, and ensuring that funding instruments are designed in a way that reflects the

operational realities of the small-scale fleet - including through bespoke aid delivery systems with upfront financial facilities, low interest loans and 100% financing and a simplified procedure for application.

Finally, strengthening the organisational capacity of small-scale fisheries is essential for improving their access to funding and sectoral support. The current lack of dedicated financial support for the creation and functioning of small-scale Producer Organisations limits the ability of fishers to collectively manage resources, access markets, and mobilise investment. At the same time, young fishers and women continue to face significant financial barriers to entering the sector, including difficulties in securing the capital, and securing the necessary fishing vessels with licenses and fishing opportunities needed to establish viable businesses.

What we propose

Energy transition has to be part and parcel of an overall Action Plan for SSF, to secure a better future for small-scale fishers by improving viability, restoring fisheries, recognising SSF tenure, providing fair access to resources and access to markets, through a differentiated approach to SSF and Large-Scale Fisheries (LSF) as key measures.

Prioritising EMFAF support for the energy transition of small-scale fisheries is both environmentally and socially justified. Such an approach would accelerate decarbonisation, strengthen coastal communities, and ensure that the transition towards a climate-neutral fisheries sector is fair, inclusive and sustainable. This should be articulated through a dedicated “programme to the development of sustainable small-scale coastal fishing” as referred in Article 8, but also have explicit objective set up under article 14 and by including a ring fenced SSF budget allocation with a minimum % of EMFAF per member state.

For all these reasons above, we propose the **following amendments in the EMFAF Regulation**, highlighted here below **in yellow** and in track changes to the original text.

REGULATION (EU) 2021/1139 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 7 July 2021, establishing the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and amending Regulation (EU) 2017/1004 (*)**

(20) The EMFAF should contribute to achieving the environmental, economic, social and employment objectives of the CFP, as set out in Article 2 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, in particular the objectives of restoring and maintaining populations of harvested species above levels which can produce MSY, of avoiding and reducing, as far as possible, unwanted catches and of minimising the negative impact of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem. Such support should ensure that fishing activities are environmentally sustainable in the long term and are managed in a way that is consistent with the objectives set out in Article 2 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, with a view to achieving economic, social and employment benefits, contributing to the availability of healthy food supplies and contributing to a fair standard of living for those who depend on fishing activities, bearing in mind coastal fisheries and socio-economic aspects. That support should include innovation and investments in low-impact, selective, climate-resilient and low-carbon fishing practices and techniques, **as well as support for the design and construction of energy efficient vessels, retrofitting new energy efficient engines and propulsion systems to existing vessels, and the development and use of alternative, non-hydrocarbon-based fuels.** (***)

(23) It should be possible for the EMFAF to support innovation and investments on board Union fishing vessels. That support should include actions which aim to improve health, safety and working conditions, increase energy efficiency, catalyse decarbonisation and conversion to non-hydrocarbon-based fuels, retrofitting of engines and equipment that use non-hydrocarbon energy sources, and improve the quality of catches. It should not include the acquisition of equipment that increases the ability of a fishing vessel to find fish. Such support should also not lead to an increase in fishing capacity of any individual vessel, except if it directly results from an increase in gross tonnage of a fishing vessel that is necessary for improving safety, working conditions or energy efficiency. In those cases, the increase in fishing capacity of the individual vessel should be compensated for by the prior withdrawal of at least the same amount of fishing capacity without public aid from the same fleet segment or from a fleet segment where the fishing capacity is not in balance with the available fishing opportunities, in order not to lead to any increase in fishing capacity at fleet level. Moreover, support should not be granted simply for complying with requirements that are obligatory under Union law, with the exception of requirements imposed by a Member State to give effect to optional provisions under Council Directive (EU) 2017/159⁽¹¹⁾ and in relation to the purchase, installation and management of certain equipment for control purposes. Under an architecture without prescriptive measures, it should be up to Member States to lay down the precise eligibility rules for those investments. With regard to health, safety and working conditions on board fishing vessels, a higher aid intensity rate than the one that applies to other operations should be allowed. (***)

(33) Small-scale coastal fishing (SSCF) is carried out by marine and inland fishing vessels of an overall length of less than 12 metres and not using towed fishing gear, and by fishers on foot, including shellfish gatherers. That sector represents nearly 75 % of all fishing vessels registered in the Union and nearly half of all employment in the fisheries sector. Operators from small-scale coastal fisheries are particularly dependent on healthy fish stocks for their main source of income. With the aim of encouraging sustainable fishing practice, the EMFAF should therefore give those operators preferential treatment, by including a ring fenced SSF budget allocation with a minimum % per member state, through a maximum 100 % aid intensity rate, provide pre-finance in the form of low interest credit, and apply the approach successfully implemented by CLLD. In addition, Member States should take into account in their programme the specific needs of small-scale coastal fishing and describe the types of actions considered for the development of small-scale coastal fishing in the form of an Action Plan. This should include preferential financial treatment to small-scale coastal fisheries with a need for flexibility to reflect local specificities and for facilitating the generational renewal in an ageing workforce. In addition, Member States should take into account in their programme the specific needs of small-scale coastal fishing and describe the types of actions considered for the development of small-scale coastal fishing. (***)

(40) Food security relies on efficient and well-organised markets, which improve the transparency, stability, quality and diversity of the supply chain, as well as consumer information. For that purpose, it should be possible for the EMFAF to support the marketing of fishery and aquaculture products, in line with the objectives set out in Regulation (EU) No 1379/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council⁽¹⁷⁾. In particular, support should be targeted for the creation and strengthening of dedicated small-scale producer organisations, the implementation of production and marketing plans, the promotion of new market outlets and the development and dissemination of market intelligence.

(51) Under shared management, each Member State should prepare a single programme that includes an Action Plan for its small-scale fleet, which should be approved by the Commission. The Commission

should assess the draft programmes by taking into account the maximisation of their contribution to the priorities of the EMFAF and to the objectives of resilience, objectives of the Green Deal and digital transition. When assessing the draft programmes, the Commission should also take into account their contribution to the development of sustainable small-scale coastal fishing, to environmental, economic and social sustainability, to meeting the environmental and socio-economic challenges of the CFP, to the socio-economic performance of the sustainable blue economy, to the conservation and restoration of marine ecosystems, to the reduction of marine litter and to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change.

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CHAPTER III

Programming

Article 8

Programming for support under shared management

1. In accordance with Article 21 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, each Member State shall prepare a single programme to implement the priorities set out in Article 3 of this Regulation (the 'programme').

In the preparation of the programme, the Member States shall endeavour to take into account regional and/or local challenges, as appropriate, and may identify intermediate bodies in accordance with Article 71(3) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.

2. Support under Title II of this Regulation in pursuit of the policy objectives set out in Article 5 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 shall be organised along the priorities and specific objectives as set out in Annex II to this Regulation.

3. In addition to the elements referred to in Article 22 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, the programme shall include:

(a) an analysis of the situation in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and the identification of the needs that require to be addressed in the relevant geographical area, including, where appropriate, sea basins relevant for the programme;

(b) where applicable, the action plans for the outermost regions referred to in Article 35.

4. While carrying out the analysis of the situation in terms of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats referred to in point (a) of paragraph 3 of this Article, Member States shall take into account the specific needs of small-scale coastal fishing, as set out in Annex V to Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.

For the specific objectives that contribute to the development of sustainable small-scale coastal fishing, Member States shall describe the types of actions considered for that purpose, as set out in point (i) of point (d) of Article 22(3) of, and Annex V to, Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.

The managing authority shall endeavour to take into account the specificities of small-scale coastal fishing operators for possible simplification measures, such as simplified application forms.

5. The Commission shall assess the programme in accordance with Article 23 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060. In its assessment it shall take into account, in particular:

(a) the maximisation of the contribution of the programme to the priorities set out in Article 3 and to the objectives of resilience, green transition and digital transition, including through a wide range of innovative solutions;

(b) the contribution of the programme to the development of sustainable small-scale coastal fishing;

(c) the contribution of the programme to environmental, economic and social sustainability;

(d) the balance between the fishing capacity of the fleets and the available fishing opportunities, as reported annually by Member States in accordance with Article 22(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013;

(e) where applicable, the multiannual management plans adopted under Articles 9 and 10 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, the management plans adopted under Article 19 of Regulation (EC) No 1967/2006 and the recommendations adopted by RFMOs that bind the Union;

(f) the implementation of the landing obligation referred to in Article 15 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013;

(g) the most recent evidence on the socio-economic performance of the sustainable blue economy, in particular in the fishery and aquaculture sector;

(h) where applicable, the regional sea basin analyses developed by the Commission indicating the common strengths and weaknesses of each sea basin with regard to the achievement of the objectives of the CFP as set out in Article 2 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013;

(i) the contribution of the programme to the conservation and restoration of marine ecosystems, while the support related to Natura 2000 areas shall be in accordance with the prioritised action frameworks established pursuant to Article 8(4) of Directive 92/43/EEC;

(j) the contribution of the programme to the reduction of marine litter, in accordance with Directive (EU) 2019/904 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽²⁹⁾;

(k) the contribution of the programme to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

5a. By 30 June 2027, the Commission shall assess how each EMFAF programme could best ensure alignment with the Energy Transition Roadmap with particular reference to the energy transition of small-scale fisheries. Where relevant, the Commission shall invite the Member States concerned to propose an amendment to their programme to maximise the contribution to the energy transition across the seafood sector, including fishing, aquaculture, and downstream processing and trading activities.

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Article 12

Eligibility for support from the EMFAF under shared management

1. Without prejudice to the rules on eligibility of expenditure laid down in Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, Member States may select for support under this Title the operations which:

- (a) fall under the scope of the priorities and specific objectives set out in Article 8(2);
- (b) are not ineligible pursuant to Article 13; and
- (c) are in accordance with applicable Union law.

2. The EMFAF may support investments on board necessary to comply with requirements imposed by a Member State to give effect to optional provisions under Directive (EU) 2017/159.

3. The construction, acquisition or modernisation of a prototype or demonstrator fishing vessel to promote decarbonisation and energy efficiency shall not be subject to the prohibitions or restrictions set out in Article 13 concerning the construction or acquisition of fishing vessels or the replacement or modernisation of engines. Such construction, acquisition or modernisation shall be considered eligible when it contributes to innovation, testing of new technologies for decarbonisation and energy efficiency or the development of sustainable fishing practices.

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CHAPTER II

Priority 1: Fostering sustainable fisheries and the restoration and conservation of aquatic biological resources

Section 1

Scope of support

Article 14

Specific objectives

1. Support under this Chapter shall cover interventions that contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the CFP as set out in Article 2 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, through one or

more of the following specific objectives:

- (a) strengthening economically, socially and environmentally sustainable fishing activities;
- (b) increasing energy efficiency, reducing dependency in fossil fuels, and reducing CO₂ emissions through the replacement or modernisation of engines and propulsion systems of fishing vessels under 12 metres LOA using passive gears;
- (c) promoting the adjustment of fishing capacity to fishing opportunities in cases of permanent cessation of fishing activities and contributing to a fair standard of living in cases of temporary cessation of fishing activities;
- (d) fostering efficient fisheries control and enforcement, including fighting against IUU fishing, as well as reliable data for knowledge-based decision making;
- (e) promoting a level-playing field for fishery and aquaculture products from the outermost regions; and (f) contributing to the protection and restoration of aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems.

f) promoting the development of sustainable small-scale coastal fishing through national Action Plans for SSCF;

2. Support under this Chapter may be granted to inland fishing under the conditions provided for in Article 16.

Section 2

Specific conditions

New Article 15b

Action Plans for the development of sustainable SS coastal Fishing

1. Member States will include in their programme an action plan for small-scale coastal fishing, which will be monitored on the basis of indicators (including social indicators) for which milestones and targets will be set.
2. These Action Plans should make financial support available for the following measures, amongst others:
 - a) For generational renewal with preferential financing arrangements (prefinancing, low interest credits, 100% grants) made available to young fishers between the ages of 18 and 30
 - b) For the energy transition of the SSCF fleet, including for increased energy efficiency, for alternative fuels and energy sources, for alternative engines and propulsion systems, for energy audits, for reducing dependence on fossil fuels and for the decarbonisation of the value chain from sea to plate (including the co-design and construction of demonstrators and prototypes, vessel retrofits, fleet renewal, and needed related equipment & inshore infrastructure, such as charge points)

c) For developing new and strengthening existing dedicated SSCF Producer Organisations (POs).d) setting up dedicated low carbon SSCF value chains, with direct marketing schemes which differentiate SSCF products - including through a Participative Guarantee Scheme

e) Social dialogue, capacity building and support measures for setting up co-management structures for the co-management of inshore waters, including fishery regenerative zones.

3. The programme will be accompanied with a fit for purpose/ bespoke SSF aid delivery system, which includes pre-financing, low interest credit schemes, and 100% grants and a simplified system for application, including a 1 page application form for small grants.

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Article 17

First acquisition of a fishing vessel

1. By way of derogation from point (c) of Article 13, the EMFAF may support the first acquisition of a fishing vessel under 12 metres LOA that uses non-towed gears, or the acquisition of partial ownership thereof.

The support referred to in the first subparagraph shall contribute to the specific objective referred to in point (a) of Article 14(1).

2. 40% support under this Article will be ring-fenced and reserved for natural persons who:

- (a) are no more than 40 years of age at the date of submission of the application for support; and
- (b) has worked at least five years as fisher or has acquired adequate qualification.

3. Support under paragraph 1 may also be granted to legal entities wholly owned by one or more natural persons who each fulfil the conditions set out in paragraph 2.

4. Support under this Article may be granted for the joint first acquisition of a fishing vessel by several natural persons who each fulfil the conditions set out in paragraph 2.

5. Support under this Article may also be granted for the acquisition of partial ownership of a fishing vessel by a natural person who fulfils the conditions set out in paragraph 2 and who shall be deemed to have controlling rights on that vessel through ownership of at least 33 % of the vessel or of the shares in the vessel or by a legal entity which fulfils the conditions set out in paragraph 3 and which shall be deemed to have controlling rights on that vessel through ownership of at least of 33 % of the vessel or of the shares in the vessel.

6. Support under this Article may be granted only in respect of a fishing vessel which:

- (a) belongs to a fleet segment for which the latest report on fishing capacity, referred to in Article 22(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, has shown a balance with the fishing opportunities available to that segment;

(b) is equipped for fishing activities;

(c) is not longer than 12 metres in overall length using non-towed gear; and

(e) has been registered in the Union fleet register for a maximum of 30 calendar years preceding the year of submission of the application for support.

7. The first acquisition of a fishing vessel supported under this Article shall not be considered a transfer of ownership of a business within the meaning of point (g) of Article 13.

Article 18

Replacement or modernisation of a main or ancillary engine

1. By way of derogation from point (m) of Article 13, the EMFAF may support the replacement or modernisation of a main or ancillary engine and/ or propulsion system of a fishing vessel up to 12metres using non-towed gear in overall length where it contributes to decarbonisation, improved energy efficiency, and lower CO2 emissions.

The support referred to in the first subparagraph shall contribute to the specific objective referred to in point (b) of Article 14(1).

2. Support under this Article may be granted only under the following conditions:

(a) the vessel belongs to a fleet segment for which the latest report on fishing capacity, referred to in Article 22(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, has shown a balance with the fishing opportunities available to that segment;

(b) the vessel has been registered in the Union fleet register for at least five calendar years preceding the year of submission of the application for support;

(c), the new or modernised engine and propulsion system uses an alternative to fossil fuels, has greater energy efficiency and at least 20% lower CO2 emissions compared to the current engine

3. Member States shall ensure that all replaced or modernised engines are subject to a physical verification.

4. The fishing capacity withdrawn due to the replacement or modernisation of a main or ancillary engine shall not be replaced.

The Commission shall adopt implementing acts to identify the energy-efficient technologies referred to in point (a) of the second subparagraph of this paragraph and to further specify the methodology elements for the implementation of poin (c) of that subparagraph. Those implementing acts shall be adopted in accordance with the examination procedure referred to in Article 63(2).

Article 19

Increase in the gross tonnage of a fishing vessel to improve safety, working conditions or energy efficiency or CO2 emissions reduction

1. By way of derogation from point (a) of Article 13, the EMFAF may support operations that increase the gross tonnage of a fishing vessel for the purposes of improving safety, working conditions, or energy efficiency or CO₂ emissions reduction.

The support referred to in the first subparagraph shall contribute to the specific objective referred to in point (a) of Article 14(1).

2. Support under this Article may be granted only under the following conditions:

(a) the fishing vessel belongs to a fleet segment for which the latest report on fishing capacity, referred to in Article 22(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, has shown a balance of the fishing capacity of the segment with the fishing opportunities available to that segment;

(b) the fishing vessel is not longer than 12 metres in overall length and uses non-towed gears;

(d) the entry into the fishing fleet of new fishing capacity generated by the operation is compensated for by the prior withdrawal of at least the same amount of fishing capacity without public aid from the same fleet segment or from a fleet segment for which the latest report on fishing capacity, referred to in Article 22(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, has shown that the fishing capacity is not in balance with the fishing opportunities available to that segment.

3. For the purposes of paragraph 1, only the following operations shall be eligible:

(a) the increase in gross tonnage necessary for the subsequent installation or renovation of accommodation facilities dedicated to the exclusive use of the crew, including sanitary facilities, common areas, kitchen facilities and shelter deck structures;

(b) the increase in gross tonnage necessary for the subsequent improvement or installation of on-board fire prevention systems, safety and alarm systems or noise-reduction systems;

(c) the increase in gross tonnage necessary for the subsequent installation of integrated bridge systems to improve navigation or engine control;

(d) the increase in gross tonnage necessary for the subsequent installation or renovation of an engine or a propulsion system that demonstrates a better energy efficiency or lower CO₂ emissions compared to the previous situation, which does not have a power exceeding the fishing vessel's previously certified engine power pursuant to Article 40(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009, and whose maximum power output is certified by the manufacturer for that engine or propulsion system model;

(e) the replacement or renovation of the bulbous bow, kort nozzle or other hull modifications provided that these improves the overall energy efficiency and or reduced CO₂ emissions of the fishing vessel.

4. As part of the data provided pursuant to Article 46(3), Member States shall communicate to the Commission the characteristics of the operations supported under this Article, including the amount of the fishing capacity increased and the purpose of that increase.

5. Support under this Article shall not cover operations related to investments aimed at improving safety, working conditions or energy efficiency where such operations do not increase the fishing capacity of the vessel concerned. Those operations may be supported in accordance with Article 12. (***)

CHAPTER III

Priority 2: Fostering sustainable aquaculture activities and processing and marketing of fishery and aquaculture products, thus contributing to food security in the Union

Section 1

Scope of support

Article 26

Specific objectives

1. Support under this Chapter shall cover interventions that contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the CFP as set out in Article 2 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, through the following specific objectives:

(a) promoting sustainable aquaculture activities, especially strengthening the competitiveness of aquaculture production, while ensuring that the activities are environmentally sustainable in the long term;

(b) promoting marketing, quality and added value of fishery and aquaculture products, as well as processing of those products.

(c) promoting the market differentiation of products derived from SSCF activities through dedicated SSCF POs and appropriate marketing schemes, including Participative Guarantee Schemes for SSCF

2. By way of derogation from point (j) of Article 13, in case of exceptional events causing a significant disruption of markets, the support referred to in point (b) of paragraph 1 of this Article may cover:

(a) compensation to operators of the fishery and aquaculture sector for their income foregone or additional costs; and

(b) compensation to recognised producer organisations and associations of producer organisations which store fishery products listed in Annex II to Regulation (EU) No 1379/2013, provided that those products are stored in accordance with Articles 30 and 31 of that Regulation.

The support referred to in the first subparagraph may be eligible only if the Commission has established, by means of an implementing decision, the occurrence of an exceptional event. Expenditure shall be eligible only during the duration set out in that implementing decision.

3. In addition to the activities referred to in point (a) of paragraph 1 of this Article within the scope of Article 2 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, support under that point may also cover interventions that contribute to aquaculture providing environmental services, as well as to ensuring animal health and welfare in aquaculture within the scope of Regulation (EU) 2016/429

of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽³²⁾.

4. Support under point (b) of paragraph 1 of this Article may also contribute to the achievement of the objectives of common organisation of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products as provided for in Article 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, including the production and marketing plans as described in Article 28 of Regulation (EU) No 1379/2013, and in line with Recitals 7 and 8 where establishing SSCF POs is a priority.