



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



General Fisheries  
Commission for  
the Mediterranean

# **GUIDELINES FOR** **streamlining aquaculture licensing and leasing processes**



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# Preparation of this document

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This document presents guidelines for streamlining aquaculture licensing and leasing processes that were prepared by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Reducing delays in the implementation of administrative procedures to establish aquaculture farms is a priority of the GFCM as addressed in its strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture (Target 1 “Build an efficient regulatory and administrative framework to secure sustainable aquaculture development”). These guidelines aim to provide useful guidance on how to facilitate such processes.

The guidelines were developed following the decision made by the GFCM at its thirty-ninth session (Italy, May 2015) and the conclusions of the Regional Aquaculture Conference “Blue Growth in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea: developing sustainable aquaculture for food security” (Italy, December 2014).

They were discussed at the tenth session of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ; Türkiye, March 2017) and adopted by the Commission at its forty-first session (Montenegro, October 2017) as Resolution GFCM/41/2017/2 on guidelines for the streamlining of aquaculture authorization and leasing processes.

This document builds on the work of the CAQ and integrates an analysis of compiled information from the national, regional and international levels on aquaculture regulatory frameworks, administrative procedures for aquaculture licensing and leasing and ongoing and planned initiatives, with a view to simplifying them.

As part of their elaboration, these guidelines were shared amongst a wide array of stakeholders and experts in a participatory process to gather their inputs and priorities. The guidelines were then revised based on the results of these consultations to ensure that they aligned with their views. They were developed with the financial support of the European Union.



# Contents

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<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Development process</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3. Scope</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4. International context</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5. Guidelines</b>	<b>8</b>
5.1 Regulatory and administrative framework	8
5.2 Consenting bodies	9
5.3 Reference contact points	10
5.4 Consenting process	11
5.4.1 Allocated zones for aquaculture	11
5.4.2 Pre-application phase	12
5.4.3 Documentation	13
5.4.4 Facilitated licences	15
5.4.4 Time frame	15
5.5 Institutional capacity, coordination and participation of the general public	16
<b>References</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Glossary</b>	<b>20</b>

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# Abbreviations and acronyms

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AZA	allocated zone for aquaculture
CAQ	Scientific Advisory Committee on Aquaculture (GFCM)
CCRF	Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (FAO)
COFI	Committee on Fisheries (FAO)
EIA	environmental impact assessment
EMP	environmental monitoring programme
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GFCM	General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHO	World Health Organization

# Executive summary

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Aquaculture production in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea has grown steadily in recent decades resulting in an industry that greatly contributes to enhancing food security, employment and economic development. It is characterized by a wide range of production systems, farmed species and technologies. Unfortunately, further development is hampered by licensing and leasing processes that tend to be lengthy and cumbersome. Acknowledging the need to facilitate these processes, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) included the development of regional guidelines to simplify administrative procedures to streamline aquaculture authorization processes in the 2015–2016 work programme for its Scientific Advisory Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ) and adopted them in 2017. The main purpose of these guidelines is to support Mediterranean and Black Sea countries in streamlining licensing and leasing procedures through the provision of guiding principles and minimum common criteria in order to:

i) create an enabling environment for aquaculture development and foster viable investments; ii) facilitate the harmonious development of aquaculture; and iii) help achieve a level playing field in the region. The guidelines propose common definitions, concepts, standards and reference documents to contribute to enabling regulatory frameworks, support coordination among the various bodies responsible for aquaculture-related matters, and promote soft-law mechanisms to simplify administrative procedures for licensing and leasing processes. Following an introduction on the background and scope of the guidelines, this document highlights the need to create a regulatory and administrative framework dedicated to aquaculture, optimize the number of consenting bodies, establish a reference contact point and increase awareness of the relevance of aquaculture development for local and coastal communities through the creation of institutional mechanisms and programmes. It also includes details of the criteria and procedures necessary to facilitate the consenting process.

# 1. Introduction

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Aquaculture production in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea has grown steadily over recent decades and this trend is projected to continue. The industry plays a key role in achieving food security, employment and economic development and is characterized by a wide range of production systems, farmed species and technologies.

Licensing and leasing processes are among the main constraints hampering the development of the sector in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea as they tend to be lengthy and cumbersome, constituting de facto barriers to industry development.

Both the regulatory constraints on aquaculture and the need for better coordination to streamline authorization processes were acknowledged at the regional and international level, including at the regional conference “Blue Growth in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea: developing sustainable aquaculture for food security” (Italy, December 2014) organized by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

These guidelines have been prepared on the basis of a review of the latest information available from, namely Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, the European Union, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Libya, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, Spain, Tunisia and Türkiye.



## 2. Development process

A participatory and consultative process during the development of the guidelines ensured that they aligned with the views of key stakeholders, reflecting their priorities, inputs and expertise (Figure 1). This process began in 2014 at the Bari Regional Aquaculture Conference, at which different stakeholders stressed the importance of having tailored tools for the Mediterranean and the Black Sea for the sustainable development of the aquaculture sector.

The guidelines were proposed according to Mediterranean and Black Sea countries' priorities and regional strategy outputs towards the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and following the implementation of several case studies.

In addition, contributions from individual countries, experts and farmers, as well as the collection of best practices and success stories of farming aquatic foods from around the region, were taken into account.

The GFCM guidelines have already been used by different stakeholders and countries and have been applied and tailored to the national and local levels. This framework of cooperation will be used to continue updating and improving the guidelines with new findings, as well as to improve knowledge sharing within the region and to promote the blue transformation of aquaculture.

**FIGURE 1. Features of the guidelines' development process**



# 3. Scope

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The guidelines follow a regional approach tailored to Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture and related stakeholders. They are based on common definitions and concepts constituting a shared template at the regional scale that should subsequently be adapted to national and local conditions.

The overall objective of the guidelines is to support Mediterranean and Black Sea countries in streamlining licensing and leasing procedures in order to facilitate the development of aquaculture. This goal will be achieved through the provision of guiding principles and minimum common criteria that should: i) create an enabling environment for aquaculture development and foster viable investments; ii) facilitate the harmonious development of aquaculture; and iii) help to achieve a level playing field in the region.

The guidelines specifically aim to:

- **propose common definitions, concepts, standards and reference documents** that contribute to enabling regulatory frameworks;
- **support coordination among the various bodies** responsible for aquaculture-related matters; and
- **promote soft-law mechanisms** to simplify administrative procedures for licensing and leasing processes.

The guidelines rely on the principles of good governance, accountability, transparency and social responsibility.

They are based on the best available knowledge and good practices in terms of administrative and public sector management, efficient regulatory and administrative frameworks and participatory policymaking processes.

The guidelines are advisory in nature and consistent with existing national, supra-national and international instruments. They should be considered a tool at the disposal of countries to enhance existing processes.

The varying stages of maturity of aquaculture industries, resulting from regional specificities and different legal contexts in countries bordering the Mediterranean and Black Sea, should be taken into account, along with the capacity of developing states to implement the guidelines.

To ensure their effective implementation and secure a level playing field in the region, these guidelines should be adjusted, if necessary, to specific conditions. Preparatory work on implementation needs should be carried out, as appropriate, possibly through the provision of technical assistance.



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## 4. International context

The guidelines take into account relevant international instruments, declarations, initiatives and guidelines, in particular those relating to sustainable aquaculture development and responsible fisheries.



## INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

**1995**

The 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) of FAO, particularly its Article 9.1.1 recognizing the need to take into account the social aspects of fisheries and aquaculture and the importance of governance in aquaculture by requiring states to establish, maintain and develop an appropriate legal and administrative framework to facilitate the development of responsible aquaculture (FAO, 1995).



**1998**

The 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work by the International Labour Organization (ILO), which commits its member states to respect and promote principles and rights associated with the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of forced or compulsory labour, the abolition of child labour and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation (ILO, 1998).

**2007**

The ecosystem approach to aquaculture, formalized in 2007 at an FAO expert workshop, as “a strategy for the integration of the activity within the wider ecosystem in such a way that it promotes sustainable development, equity, and resilience of interlinked social and ecological systems” (Soto, Aguilar-Manjarrez and Hishamunda, eds., 2008).

**2009**

Marine spatial planning, according to “Marine spatial planning: a step-by-step approach toward ecosystem-based management,” prepared by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and Man and the Biosphere Programme of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization which aims at setting up a successful marine spatial planning initiative that can help to achieve ecosystem-based management (Ehler and Douvère, 2009).



**2009**

Environmental impact assessment, according to *Environmental impact assessment and monitoring in aquaculture* of FAO, which introduces the environmental impact assessment (EIA) and highlights its role in regulating the assessment of the environmental effects of a wide range of public and private projects that are likely to have significant effects on the environment, including aquaculture (FAO, 2009).

**2011**

The *Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification*, developed by FAO upon the request of the third session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) Sub-Committee on Aquaculture (India, September 2006) and adopted at the twenty-ninth session of the COFI (Italy, January–February 2011), which provide advice on developing, organizing and implementing credible aquaculture certification schemes (FAO, 2011b).







## 2011

The twenty-ninth session of the COFI, which provided recommendations on the role of FAO in improving the integration of fisheries and aquaculture development and management, biodiversity conservation and environmental protection (FAO, 2011a).

## 2012

Resolution GFCM/36/2012/1 on guidelines on allocated zones for aquaculture, which invites countries to include schemes for the identification and allocation of specific zones reserved for aquaculture activities and to introduce the allocated zone for aquaculture (AZA) and environmental monitoring programme (EMP) concepts in their national marine spatial planning strategies (FAO, 2012).



## 2016

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standard 14004:2016, that provides guidance on the establishment, implementation, maintenance and improvement of a robust, credible and reliable environmental management system (ISO, 2016).

## 2020

The 2020 Shanghai Declaration of the Global Conference on Aquaculture, which provides a roadmap to optimize the role that aquaculture can play in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (FAO, 2021).



## 2022

The draft FAO guidelines for sustainable aquaculture elaborated at the eleventh session of the Sub-committee on Aquaculture in May 2022, which are global in scope and are intended to support the visibility, recognition and enhancement of the aquaculture sector's important role in contributing to global, regional and national efforts towards the eradication of hunger and poverty and socioeconomic development for the benefit of current and future generations (FAO, 2022b).

## 2022

The Codex Alimentarius developed by FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO) since 1963, which is a collection of internationally recognized standards, codes of practice, guidelines, and other recommendations relating to food, food production, and food safety (FAO, 2022a).



# 5. Guidelines

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## 5.1 REGULATORY AND ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK

A regulatory and administrative framework dedicated to aquaculture should be ensured in order to reinforce the legal basis of the aquaculture industry and enshrine its sustainable development within an appropriate governance framework (Figure 2).

Wherever necessary, a specific law or regulation on aquaculture should be issued or amended to improve the existing regulatory and administrative framework, with specific provisions on:

- administrative procedures for granting licences and leases, ensuring the legal security of the investor and the granting body;
  - the use of the public domain for aquaculture and the associated criteria and requirements, with reference to aquaculture planning (for new planning areas and areas with pre-existing development) and aquaculture site selection;
  - the use of coordinated spatial planning and associated tools (for example, geographic information systems);
  - the harmonization of aquaculture development plans with other national and supranational spatial planning and plans, policies and programmes;
- the mandatory establishment of AZAs;
  - the quality of the environment hosting aquaculture and the requirements for water quality, levels of chemical and ecological quality and levels of ecosystem and biodiversity protection, as well as environmental monitoring; and
  - the establishment of mechanisms for communication, cooperation and coordination among national authorities involved in planning, development, conservation and management of coastal areas.

**The consistency of policy and legislation between different levels and sectors of the relevant authorities should be promoted.**

Soft and secondary law tools, such as guidelines and voluntary schemes, should be developed and adopted to simplify administrative procedures while ensuring legally robust licence determinations.

## 5.2 CONSENTING BODIES

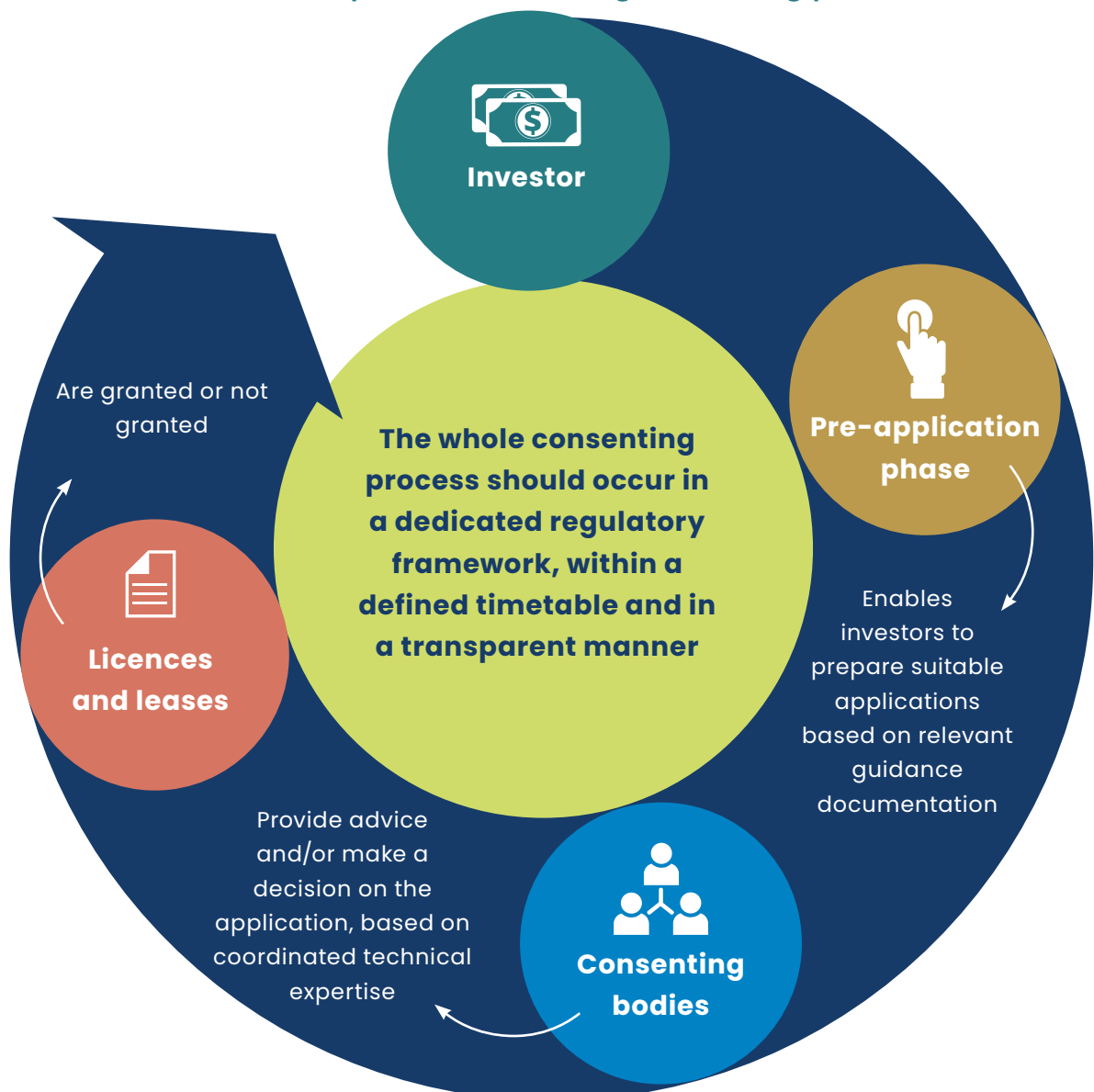
The processes for granting aquaculture licences and leases are associated with a number of rules and procedures involving various consenting bodies. The number of bodies involved in the consenting process should be kept to a minimum in order to shorten the time intervals between application and final decision, facilitate consultation processes and avoid repetition of efforts by investors and consenting bodies.

The number of consenting bodies should be enough to guarantee sufficient

expertise to obtain decisive advice and come to informed decisions based on the best available knowledge for the implementation of aquaculture activities.

A coordinating body could be established at the national level to enhance institutional and administrative coordination. It could comprise representatives from different relevant public institutions and departments with specific expertise on aquaculture and involvement in existing aquaculture national initiatives.

**FIGURE 2. Streamlined aquaculture licensing and leasing process**



### 5.3 REFERENCE CONTACT POINTS

The establishment of a reference contact point for the aquaculture consenting process, such as in the “one-stop-shop” or “single-window” approach, should be considered. Such a reference contact point could be housed at the national level (or at the appropriate first-level administrative division according to aquaculture competencies in the country, for example, within regions, provinces, or municipalities) within an existing competent authority, which would then require the consent of other authorities, as appropriate. The establishment of an online platform for the submission, analysis and processing of licence applications could be foreseen; this platform could work in an interoperational manner with other systems in use by all relevant aquaculture consenting bodies.

The establishment of a reference contact point would confer the following benefits:

- Create a single contact to drive the whole aquaculture consenting process and make the submission of applications easier for investors.
- Provide a general view on legislations and regulations governing aquaculture activities, thus enabling a streamlined and coordinated process from submission to decision, so that consents are granted at the same time or in an appropriate sequence.
- Provide an overview and proactive guidance on all stages of the licensing process, from the pre-application phase to the decision phase, for all types of licences (such as marine finfish, marine shellfish, algae or seaweed farms), as well as on the zones, production techniques and environmental requirements for aquaculture development.
- Permit the availability of consent application forms to investors for electronic download and completion.
- Facilitate efficient dialogue between investors and aquaculture consenting bodies, should additional information be required, and provide investors with contact details of key agents in the aquaculture consenting bodies.

## 5.4 CONSENTING PROCESS

### 5.4.1 Allocated zones for aquaculture

The consenting process should be facilitated by the formal establishment of AZAs, which are considered a management tool for the sound integration of aquaculture within marine spatial planning and coastal areas. The establishment of AZAs should be pursued to shorten the duration of the consenting process.

Criteria and parameters to identify suitable areas for aquaculture should be adopted, including:

- analysis of technical, logistical, social, economic and environmental parameters for the definition of ecosystem boundaries and the selection of areas;
- assessment of carrying capacity;
- assessment of the risks resulting from aquaculture activities to aquatic ecosystems and biodiversity (for example, from the use of non-indigenous species, from aquaculture escapes or from the use of chemicals);
- assessment of appropriate risk mitigation measures;
- identification of appropriate aquaculture farming technology to be adapted to each site and species to be farmed; and
- review of the existing users in the area to avoid competition between them and the proposed aquaculture activities.

The consenting process includes a series of procedures, from the preparation of administrative documentation to the release of licences and leases.

**The consenting process applies to decisions such as:**



issuing an aquaculture licence or aquaculture lease in a designated AZA;



amending an aquaculture licence or aquaculture lease;



renewing an aquaculture licence or aquaculture lease;



assigning an aquaculture licence or aquaculture lease;



issuing a special experimental licence or special experimental lease; and



reallocating an aquaculture site.

### 5.4.2 Pre-application phase

Before lodging an application, investors are required to prepare a series of documents to be submitted to the authorities. The pre-application phase is essential to the consenting process and should help investors to better explain to the authorities the nature and expected performance of their investment.

The introduction of a pre-application phase for investors should be promoted to initiate discussions with aquaculture consenting bodies and to ensure that

accurate information is available to them before the full application is lodged.

The pre-application phase could, *inter alia*, help flag issues, pre-empt progress on non-viable sites, provide advice to investors and enable a more efficient and focused application.

Clear procedures and assessment criteria for licence and lease applications that are coherent and comply with regulatory requirements should be established.



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### 5.4.3 Documentation

#### General guidance documents

A minimum set of guidance documents to grant aquaculture licences and leases for all types of aquaculture, relevant to local circumstances, should be made available to investors.

Guidance documents should use language that is simple, clear and understandable to the general public and provide consistent information about aquaculture consenting bodies to improve the quality of applications, thereby reducing the time required for approval. The documents need to list the competent authorities (for example, Ministry of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Rural Development) involved in granting licences and leases, as well as outline the relevant procedures, possibly through explanatory flow charts indicating the actors involved and the time limits for each procedural step, including appeals processes.

Full guidance should be provided on protocol and required documents if there is a process prior to the pre-application phase itself, and there should be a detailed description of the required information to be provided by an investor for the full application, including:

- **technical information** (farming system and characteristics, farmed species and cycles, production capacity, annual feed consumption, plan of the whole farm integrating the different components);
- **environmental information** (bathymetry, temperature, salinity, current speed, benthic community, sensitive habitats);
- **geographical information** (maps and location of proposed farming area, area in AZAs);
- **economic feasibility and integrity of the project** (capital investment in equipment and construction, estimated unit production cost assumptions, annual production planning projections, annual operating costs, financial ratios, return on investment analyses); and
- **socioeconomic information and benefits** linked to the activities carried out in the surrounding areas, such as the job opportunities associated with the aquaculture activity.

The guidance documents should also list the procedures relating to the operation and monitoring of aquaculture farms through an EMP, as well as describe the main procedures for marketing aquaculture products. These texts should also include prevailing food production and safety regulations, as well as an overview of legislation and regulations governing aquaculture activities.

## **Environmental impact assessment monitoring and guidance**

Environmental impact assessment requirements vary significantly depending on each national, and sometimes local, context. Where possible, EIA should be included in the consenting process and facilitated by the reference contact point.

Guidance documentation on the EIA process would help investors to carry out cost-effective and practical assessments. The authorities at appropriate levels should indicate, where possible, environmental objectives and associated indicators, standards and reference points to ensure compliance with the provisions of national and supranational environmental regulations, as well as the associated timetable.

The EIA should indicate clear norms and rules, including rules to control and manage pollution and waste discharges, as well as suggestions on the introduction of better management practices.

Guidance documentation should also provide full information on the potential impacts of aquaculture on different aquatic ecosystems, including on environmental measures and standards, as well as suggested mitigation measures.

Feedback mechanisms to inform the pre-application stage and refine management systems for final submission should be established, and the entire environmental assessment process, including EIA reports, should be transparent and understandable to the general public.

Environmental impact assessments and monitoring should be considered within a wider management framework. They should also be accompanied by an explanation of how the associated EMP should be established, with clear roles and responsibilities for the relevant authority and the investors, including clear procedures for the monitoring process.

Environmental monitoring templates and logbooks should be provided to investors and comprehensible EMP results should be made publicly available.





#### 5.4.4 Facilitated licences

Facilitated licence procedures could be used to promote innovative or research-based aquaculture activities, in particular those contributing to maintaining ecosystem services, including experimental development licences for activities that test, develop or adapt farming systems and technologies (for example those with low carbon footprint), diversify production or carry out basic and applied research (Figure 3).

#### 5.4.5 Time frame

Within the consenting process, a time frame broken down by month should be set for each aquaculture consenting body – or step in the process – to help investors plan their investment schedule.

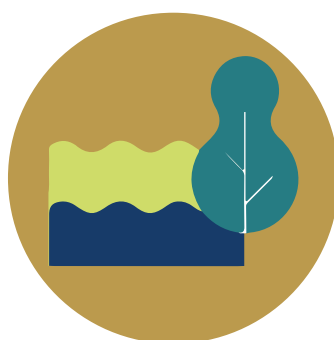
The time frame should detail the expected duration of the pre-application assessment and the time needed for advice provision, as well as for the evaluation of the full application and the notification of final decisions, taking into account the current legislation in place and associated consenting bodies.

**FIGURE 3. Potential priorities for facilitated licensing procedures**



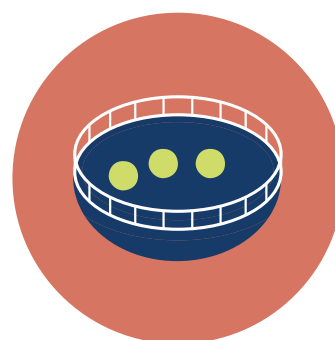
**Aquaculture associated with ecosystem services maintenance**

(such as shellfish and algae aquaculture that can contribute towards removing CO<sub>2</sub> from the environment)



**Integrated multitrophic aquaculture**

(which helps to create balanced systems for environmental remediation, in other words, biomitigation, through a combination of fed and extractive aquaculture)



**Aquaculture associated with marine protected areas**

(which uses marine finfish and shellfish restocking for conservation purposes)

## 5.5 INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY, COORDINATION AND PARTICIPATION OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Awareness of the relevance of aquaculture development for local and coastal communities should be improved among institutions. The institutional and administrative capacities of the consenting bodies should also be strengthened at the national and local levels in order to increase staff capacity to oversee aquaculture consenting processes.

Institutional mechanisms and programmes should be put in place to:

- promote knowledge sharing and communication flows on aquaculture development, licensing and leasing procedures;
- organize ad hoc capacity-building programmes to increase staff competencies, skills and practical capacities to cope with administrative aquaculture licensing and leasing procedures;
- make available reference documents and guidelines, including the provisions of national and supranational

environmental regulations concerning aquaculture development (for example, descriptors of the quality of the environment; criteria to assess the status of the environment; water quality requirements; potential impact and specific monitoring programmes and parameters to be assessed and followed); and

- introduce working methods and procedures to increase the efficacy of institutions in responding to the needs of investors.

Participatory and consenting mechanisms and programmes involving local communities and other interest groups in aquaculture planning and development should also be put in place, or enhanced where they already exist, possibly through the establishment of multistakeholder platforms or other consultation committees aiming to increase the social acceptability of aquaculture.



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# Glossary

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## **Allocated zone for aquaculture (AZA):**

A marine area where the development of aquaculture has priority over other uses, and therefore will be primarily dedicated to aquaculture. The identification of an AZA results from zoning processes undertaken through participatory spatial planning, whereby administrative bodies legally establish that specific spatial areas within a region have priority for aquaculture development (Macias *et al.*, 2019).

## **Aquaculture:**

The farming of aquatic organisms that implies some sort of intervention in the rearing process to enhance production. Farming also implies individual or corporate ownership of the stock being cultivated (FAO, 2022c).

## **Aquaculture consenting bodies:**

This includes any body that is responsible for making decisions and, where applicable, providing advice, on the aquaculture consenting process.

## **Aquaculture consenting process:**

This includes licensing and leasing processes. Aquaculture consenting processes refer to all actions to be undertaken by an investor through aquaculture consenting bodies within a given aquaculture consenting system in order to operate an aquaculture activity.

## **Aquaculture escape:**

The sum of fish escape and escape through spawning (Arechavala-Lopez *et al.*, 2017).

## **Aquaculture governance:**

The set of processes by which a jurisdiction manages its resources with respect to aquaculture, how its stakeholders participate in making and implementing decisions affecting the sector, how government personnel are accountable to the aquaculture community and other stakeholders, and how the respect of the rule of law is applied and enforced (FAO, 2017).

## **Aquaculture lease:**

This grants the exclusive right to use an area of water or state-owned submerged lands for marine aquaculture, usually for a defined period of time, in exchange for some sort of payment. The series of procedures necessary to obtain a lease shall be called the "leasing process".

## **Aquaculture licence:**

This authorizes the installation and operation of a facility in the water and describes the activity that can be undertaken. The use of a licence is usually restricted to a specific area, defined species, and specified limit of production (maximum allowed biomass) or stocking density. The series of procedures necessary to obtain a licence shall be called the "licensing process".

## **Biodiversity:**

The variability among living organisms from all sources including, *inter alia*, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are a part: this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems (FAO, 2022c).

### **Environmental impact assessment (EIA):**

A set of activities designed to identify and predict the impacts of a proposed action on the bio-geophysical environment and on human health and wellbeing, and to interpret and communicate information about the impacts and potential mitigation measures (FAO, 2022c).

### **Environmental monitoring programme (EMP):**

The EMP for marine cage finfish farming is defined as a flexible and adaptable functional tool at the disposal of the authorities and the aquaculture industry for monitoring aquaculture management practices to ensure the environmental sustainability of the sector (FAO, 2022c).

### **Marine spatial planning:**

A public process of analysing and allocating the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in marine areas to achieve ecological, economic, and social objectives that usually have been specified through a political process (Ehler and Douvere, 2009).

### **Non-indigenous species:**

Any live specimen of a species and subspecies of aquatic organisms introduced outside its known natural range and the area of its natural dispersal potential (FAO, 2022c).

### **Social acceptability:**

Firstly, social acceptability is an integral part of sustainability and refers to social licence and the degree to which aquaculture activities are accepted by the local community, by various interest groups and by the wider society (Hishamunda, Ridler and Martone, 2014). Secondly, social acceptability is a judgement people make about whether an action, attribute, or condition is rated as superior or relatively neutral when compared with potential alternatives (Brunson and Shindler, 2004).

### **Stakeholder:**

A large group of individuals and groups of individuals (including governmental and nongovernmental institutions, traditional communities, universities, research institutions, development agencies and banks, donors, etc.) with an interest or claim (whether stated or implied) which has the potential of being impacted by or having an impact on a given project and its objectives (FAO, 2022c).

### **Sustainable development:**

The management and conservation of the natural resource base, and the orientation of technological and institutional change in such a manner as to ensure the attainment of continued satisfaction of human needs for present and future generations. Such sustainable development conserves land, water, plants and animal genetic resources and is environmentally non-degrading, technologically appropriate, economically viable and socially acceptable (FAO, 2022c).







# **GUIDELINES FOR STREAMLINING AQUACULTURE LICENSING AND LEASING PROCESSES**

This publication presents guidelines prepared and adopted by the GFCM with a view to streamlining licensing and leasing processes for the aquaculture sector in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Specifically, it proposes common definitions, concepts, standards and reference documents that contribute to enabling regulatory frameworks guiding aquaculture development. By recommending practical actions to stakeholders, these guidelines aim to facilitate and simplify administrative procedures underpinning aquaculture authorization processes and provide decision-makers with a useful tool for policy development.

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