QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE

Costas KADIS

Fisheries and Oceans

1. General competence, European commitment and personal independence

What aspects of your personal qualifications and experience are particularly relevant for becoming Commissioner and promoting the European general interest, particularly in the area you would be responsible for? How will you contribute to implementing the political guidelines of the Commission? How will you implement gender mainstreaming and integrate a gender perspective into all policy areas of your portfolio? How will you implement youth mainstreaming?

What guarantees of independence are you able to give Parliament, and how would you make sure that any past, current or future activities you carry out could not cast doubt on the performance of your duties within the Commission?

My academic background and professional experience are closely aligned with core priorities of the European Union, particularly in the field I would be responsible for.

I am a biologist with a Ph.D. in conservation biology and a Professor of Biodiversity Conservation. My research, funded by the European Commission and the UN, focuses on biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource management, including the relevant socio economic aspects. Beyond my academic career, I have also served as Minister of Health (2007-2008), Minister of Education and Culture (2014-2018), and Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development, and Environment (2018-2023) in Cyprus.

As Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development, and Environment, I oversaw the implementation of policies related to fisheries and marine research. Notably, I was responsible for implementing the Common Fisheries Policy in Cyprus and for the development of the country's Marine, Fisheries, and Aquaculture Operational Plan for 2021-2027. Additionally, in partnership with the Deputy Ministry of Shipping, we drafted the Cyprus's Maritime Spatial Plan. We also used EU instruments to provide financial support to struggling fishers, particularly during the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. During my five-year tenure, I actively participated in most AGRIFISH Council meetings, where EU-level policies and challenges regarding fisheries and ocean were addressed.

This combination of knowledge and experience will be particularly beneficial for shaping balanced policies, taking into account of all relevant dimensions, in the area I would be responsible for.

In taking forward the political guidelines, my top priority will be to ensure that the fishing and aquaculture sectors remains sustainable, competitive and resilient and that there is a level playing field for the European fisheries chain. This will be my guiding objective in also building a vision for the sector with a 2040 perspective. On this path, I will engage all relevant stakeholders in the ongoing comprehensive evaluation of the CFP and will hold Fisheries and Oceans dialogues. It is important to give equal attention to the environmental and socio-economic dimensions of the policy. Based on the evaluation's findings, I will build on the CFP's strengths and address any shortcomings, ensuring that the CFP is adapted in today's context and equipped to meet the sector's emerging challenges. In parallel, I will support Member States with the implementation of the fisheries acquis, helping them to devise swift and effective intervention actions, including through technical support by the European Commission where relevant.

I will also put forward a holistic approach to boosting the blue economy and ensuring the good governance and healthof our ocean in all of its dimensions, enshrined in the European Oceans Pact, which will be a single strategic reference framework for all ocean-related polices. I will strive to optimise the different uses of the sea, aiming to

reconcile the need for nature protection and offshore renewable energy, among others, with the needs of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. A new strengthened approach to maritime spatial planning will be a focal point in that respect. I will also explore the feasibility of European blue carbon reserves and will continue the ongoing efforts to facilitate energy transition of the fishing sector. I will also contribute to the Climate Adaptation Plan, ensuring that the vulnerability of our coastal communities and of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors are addressed. I will contribute to putting research and innovation at the heart of our economy by developing an EU Ocean research and innovation strategy.

I will develop a strategic approach for an EU Ocean diplomacy so that the EU will sustain and strengthen its leading role in setting the ocean agenda at global level, ensuring a fair, sustainable and secure use of the ocean space and its resources. My priorities will be mobilising EU partners to swiftly ratify the Treaty on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction by the UN Ocean Conference in Nice in June 2025, and implementing it in EU law. Through the EU Ocean diplomacy I will also dedicate efforts to upholding a level playing field and protecting our European fisheries chain from unfair global competition, including illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. I will also work on a new generation of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements.

The above efforts will contribute to key objectives in the political guidelines of the Commission, namely the EU's global competitiveness and security, including food security.

I am committed to gender equality. This will be a key element when developing our 2040 vision for the fisheries sector. I will pay specific attention to enhancing participation of women in the fisheries/blue economy sectors, including through possible up-skilling or enabling access to financing for female entrepreneurs.

I will also ensure gender balance in my team.

I will also ensure that the youth perspective is fully taken into account when I develop and implement the policies under my responsibility and in particular through holding regular youth dialogues. To attract younger generations, we must ensure that fisheries and aquaculture are profitable, digital, and sustainable, aligning with the values, skills and aspirations of young people. If confirmed by the Parliament, I will organize a Youth Policy Dialogue within the first 100 days of my mandate.

In executing my tasks, I will remain independent. As indicated in my declaration of interests I have resigned from all past activities and will resign from my current employment, from which I am currently on unpaid leave, upon my approval as Commissioner.

2. Management of the portfolio and cooperation with the European Parliament

Can you commit to duly informing Parliament about your actions and those of your departments? In what respect do you consider yourself accountable to Parliament?

What specific commitments are you prepared to make in terms of your engagement with and presence in Parliament, both in committee and in plenary, transparency, cooperation and effective follow-up to Parliament's positions and requests for legislative initiatives? In relation to planned initiatives or ongoing procedures, are you ready to provide Parliament with timely information and documents on an equal footing with the Council?

Accountability, respect, and collaboration with the representatives of EU citizens, the Members of the European Parliament, are fundamental to upholding our democratic values. I am fully committed to working within this framework. Throughout my political career, as a minister in three different ministries, I have consistently adhered to this approach.

I view the contributions from Parliament as essential to the legislative process. European policies should respond to the needs of EU citizens and those needs are represented by the European Parliament.

I am fully committed to reinforce the special relationship between the European Parliament and the Commission. I want to build a relationship based on openness, transparency and mutual trust.

I will ensure that the Parliament is regularly informed about all actions in the area of fisheries and ocean policies. Together with my services, I have the intention to give full effect to the requirements of the Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and I will give special attention to those provisions regarding the exchange of information. Concerning the follow-up to European Parliament's positions and requests, I will apply

the provisions of the Framework Agreement and, in my areas of responsibility, make sure that the Commission responds to parliamentary resolutions or requests made on the basis of Article 225 TFEU. More particularly, I am committed to exchange with the Parliament in a structured dialogue on policies under my portfolio to the allow Parliament to fully exercise its democratic oversight. I will also ensure that that the views of the European Parliament, as expressed in resolutions or debates, are taken fully into account when shaping fisheries and oceans policies.

I give my assurances that I will take full political responsibility for the initiatives that I will put forward on fisheries and ocean without prejudice to the principle of collegiality. I believe that good inter-institutional co-operation will lead to stronger legitimacy and accountability and contributes to efficiency and good governance.

I pledge to establish an open and transparent relationship with the Members of Parliament, based on mutual trust and regular and comprehensive exchanges of information in order for the Parliament, to be able to exercise its legislative and scrutiny roles. It is of outmost importance for me to have a good relationship with the Committee on Fisheries and other relevant committees. I will make myself available for bilateral meetings and direct communication with coordinators, rapporteurs and committee members.

In line with the Political Guidelines of the President-elect, the services under my responsibility will prepare an annual progress report for the European Parliament and the Council. This will ensure an appropriate follow up on enforcement and implementation in my portfolio. I recall that the Commission applies very high transparency standards towards the European Parliament, as the representative of EU citizen. Those standards also apply to meetings with interest representatives. I will also ensure that that the views of the European Parliament, as expressed in resolutions or debates, will be taken fully into account when shaping fisheries and oceans policies.

I am committed to fully inform the European Parliament of all planned initiatives and ongoing procedures. In that regard, it is essential that the European Parliament and the Council are treated equally when it comes to sharing information. Concretely, I am committed to fully and timely inform the European Parliament in line with the Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the Commission regarding delegated acts and international agreements.

Questions from the Committee on Fisheries

3. How will you strike a balance between the sustainable management of fisheries resources, the protection of the marine environment and the achievement of a safe, profitable and sustainable fishing sector able of ensuring generational renewal and creation of jobs?

Fishing lies at the heart of coastal communities, where it intertwines with their identity, cultural heritage, and values, providing a crucial source of livelihood. Fishing depends on a healthy ocean and productive fish stocks to ensure profitability in the long-term and the attractiveness of the fishing sector on young people. The right balance is therefore needed between the management of our fisheries resources, the income of fishers and the protection of our marine environment.

If I am confirmed as Commissioner, I intend to strike that balance by developing a long-term vision for a resilient, competitive and sustainable fisheries sector with a 2040 perspective, to which several deliverables will contribute. A comprehensive evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) with particular attention to all three pillars of sustainable development: environmental, economic and social, will allow identifying the strengths and weaknesses of this policy. On that basis I will recommend that the Commission propose the necessary measures to refine and enhance the policy for the future if necessary.

My aim is to ensure the long-term competitiveness of the sector, which will also contribute to creating jobs and attracting younger generations, while continuing to prioritise as well sustainability and the protection of the marine environment. Taking care of the environment is a prerequisite for a thriving fishing sector. Without environmental sustainability there is no socio-economic sustainability, as without fish there are no fishers.

One of the issues assessed in the ongoing evaluation will be to find ways to simplify the existing rules and to reduce administrative burden for fishers. The full potential of digital technologies and artificial intelligence should be used to streamline data collection and control. Considering that around 80% of the EU fleet is made up of small-scale fishers, the evaluation will be an opportunity to find ways to further support this fleet sector. The social side of fisheries needs to be better addressed. Social data and indicators need to be further developed. If confirmed as Commissioner, I will push for the implementation of the International Convention on Training and Certification

of Fishers to ensure better training and certification and will work, also in cooperation with my fellow Commissioners, for better safety conditions, including for smaller fishing vessels. I believe that new supportive measures regarding small-scale fishers, training, enhanced safety, healthy stocks and a digital environment would contribute to attracting more young people in the fishing sector.

In parallel to the CFP evaluation, I will continue to support Member States with the proper implementation of the CFP rules and fisheries acquis to ensure the sustainability of our fisheries. I am encouraged by the fact that the continuous implementation of the CFP resulted in the improvement of the biomass for a number of fish stocks. We need to continue on this positive path of rebuilding our fish stocks and restoring the health of our ocean and seas.

The wider protection of the marine environment will also be part of the equation. The European Oceans Pact will also contribute to this objective, by establishing a holistic framework that effectively takes into account all EU policies that affect the health of the ocean and the livelihood of fishers and coastal communities. I will ensure that agreed targets to protect our seas with its biodiversity will be achieved during this mandate.

Through an EU Ocean Research and Innovation strategy, I will also develop a comprehensive agenda for marine knowledge, innovation and investment. This will ensure that the necessary data, scientific knowledge and funds are available to take and implement those decisions which are necessary to ensure a balanced approach towards fisheries management, and to further enhance the sector's profitability.

4. Besides continuing the full implementation of the CFP, do you consider concrete reforms regarding the landing obligation, including alternatives, as well as introducing multiannual TACs, improving the implementation of an ecosystem-based approach or incentivising research for new sustainable fishing techniques?

If confirmed as Commissioner, one of the key overarching priorities throughout my mandate will be to build a competitive, sustainable, and resilient fisheries sector enjoying a level playing field along the entire value chain. This requires action on the one hand on the global stage vis-à-vis our partners in fisheries management and in trade relations, and on the other, it calls for a reflection on the way we manage fisheries within the EU. The fitness of the applicable legal framework and the way it is implemented is crucial in defining the conditions in which our sectors operate and the opportunities they have to grow, innovate, and become more profitable, while leaving a sustainable legacy for the next generations.

Therefore, if confirmed as Commissioner, my first goal will be to complete the ongoing evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation up to the highest standards of better regulation. This also includes a concrete look at the landing obligation. It is important to gather comprehensive and quality data for an assessment of how the landing obligation has performed and is working, and why it is working as it does. At the same time, I firmly believe that any legislation is only as good as its implementation. Therefore, while the evaluation is ongoing, it will be equally important to continue implementing the fisheries acquis, including the CFP Regulation and the recently revised Fisheries Control rules, in all its dimensions. In that respect, I will help Member States devise swift and effective intervention actions, including through technical support by the European Commission where relevant. Any decision in the direction of refining or strengthening the CFP Regulation should be based on sound evidence and an implementation dialogue involving all affected stakeholders. It should be directed at addressing identified weaknesses, while building on the positive outcomes to date. It should be also accompanied by an environmental and socio-economic impact assessment. Finally, any possible action with regard to the landing obligation specifically, must be based on scientific evidence and fully take into account the primary objective pursued – notably encouraging gear selectivity and avoiding wasteful discards of fish at sea. Data shows that prior to the introduction of the landing obligation, there were instances of 40% discards at sea, although almost no discards were being reported by the operators. This was not only a wasteful practice but also made it impossible to know the state of stocks, which is crucial for setting fishing opportunities. The development and use of innovative fishing techniques has the potential on the one hand to facilitate increased selectivity, while at the same time making our fleet more efficient and thus more profitable. This is why, if confirmed as Commissioner, I will encourage continued investment in data collection, science, research and innovation to help fisheries managers and our fishers being equipped with the best knowledge and technology that help them making the best decisions to fish more responsibly and therefore, more sustainably. This will be a key consideration under the Ocean Research and Innovation Strategy, which I am tasked to put forward if confirmed, and I will make marine knowledge, innovation and investment a key pillar of the European Oceans Pact.

Ecosystem considerations are already important elements of the CFP and its current implementation. Along with the evolution of science towards more inter- and trans-disciplinarity, I want the ecosystem based approach to increasingly gain importance for a more holistic approach.

Finally, let me stress that we need to keep all aspects in mind: the conservation of natural resources, the socio-economic importance of fishing for communities as well as the supply of quality fish at an affordable price.

As regards multi-annual total allowable catches (TACs), if I am confirmed as Commissioner, I intend to ask the relevant scientific bodies to deliver advice that would allow the Commission to propose additional fish quotas for 2 or more years, starting by stocks managed solely by the EU.

5. How do you intend to improve the equal opportunities for EU fishers and aquaculture producers, with particular attention to small-scale fishers, improve relations with third-countries and reconcile the EU's ambition of "leading by example" with the CFP's objective to ensure a level playing field among all EU and non-EU players, such as the United Kingdom and Norway, and the effective fight against IUU fishing practices?

When referring to equal opportunities, in addition to having in mind small-scale and large-scale fishers, I am also thinking of equal opportunities between women and men operating in the sector, as well as of making sure we keep the jobs attractive for experienced fishers as well as for newcomers to ensure generational renewal in the sector. All fishers should have equal opportunities and thrive and contribute to the economic and social well-being of their communities.

Small-scale fisheries play a very important socio-economic role in our coastal communities. This fleet represents the majority of the fishing vessels registered in the EU (76%) and almost half of the employment in the fishing sector in the EU (49%). Each fleet segment faces specific challenges and pressures, and those differ also from one sea basin to another. I am aware that one of the challenges to the competitiveness of small-scale fishers specifically is access to fishing opportunities. While the choice of allocation criteria lies fully in the remit of national authorities, if confirmed as Commissioner, I will proactively engage with Member States on how to improve the situation within their national context. Along with the publication of a vade-mecum on the allocation of fishing opportunities, I will look more closely into the correct implementation of the rules. I will not shy away from recommending changes to the policy, should this be necessary. I will further look into the diversification and combination of fisheries with other activities such as tourism.

A common challenge to all EU fishers, as well as EU aquaculture producers, is level playing field with imports from third countries and ensuring fair competition with non-EU fishers/producers. The EU has strict controls to ensure imported food meets high standards for consumer protection and safety. Improving the level playing field with third countries on aspects of social and environmental sustainability will be one of my key priorities if confirmed as Commissioner. It will also be a key pillar of the updated strategic approach to fisheries external action that I was asked to develop by the Commission President-elect, and in the context of which I intend to look at what more and what new we can do.

The EU should continue to lead by example, projecting its power in various international settings. Efforts to promote global aquaculture sustainability and sustainable fisheries through the EU participation in multilateral and regional organisations such as the FAO and its General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, and all other regional fisheries management organisations must continue unabated. The EU has already successfully promoted the main principles of the Common Fisheries Policy in the 2030 Strategy of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean: maximum sustainable yield, multiannual plans, regionalisation, protection of vulnerable species and sensitive habitats.

If confirmed as Commissioner, I will also insist that in international settings such as regional fisheries management organisations, the EU consistently promotes the adoption of standards that are in line with the CFP. My aim is to create a level playing field by bringing others up to our standards. We should use all the tools we have at our disposal, including market access, to work with partner countries. Sustainable fisheries management on the high seas can only be successful if everyone is committed.

Following the withdrawal of the United Kingdom (UK) from the EU and its Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement has created a new framework for the joint management of shared stocks in the North-East Atlantic..

Within this framework, as well as other bilateral agreements and regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs), I will continue to cooperate with relevant third countries to maintain high sustainability standards, to ensure a fair quota share and a level playing field. . If confirmed as Commissioner, for this to happen, I will:

(1) use all opportunities to promote the resilience and competitiveness of the sector by linking fisheries to the overall relation with our neighbours, in particular in the North-East Atlantic;

(2) pay careful attention to monitoring compliance with international commitments, and to ensuring stability post-2026, in particular in the context of the Fisheries Heading in the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement, and cooperate closely with the UK to promote sustainability and to minimise the impact of any regulatory divergence;

(3) promote alliance building in the region and enhanced cooperation with other coastal States in areas of common interest; and

(4) support the high-level dialogue with Norway to ensure that EU fishing rights, notably as regards cod, in Svalbard are honoured, and sustainable, legitimate and well-established EU fisheries in the Barents Sea can continue.

Finally, I will continue to defend EU quotas and secure access for EU vessels to our partners' waters, which is key for the fisheries sector's resilience and competitiveness in a changing environment.

The fight against IUU fishing is a core aspect of ensuring a level playing field. I will engage fully with the European Parliament and the Council to ensure that we can soon adopt the modification to Regulation (EU) No 1026/2012, allowing the EU to take appropriate measures towards countries that pursue unsustainable fishing. Two important aspects will run through my mandate if I am confirmed: First, for the EU to be credible internationally, compliance must be ensured internally. This is the starting point for projecting the CFP values and standards outside the EU. My focus will therefore be on the gradual but timely and full implementation of the revised fisheries control system, and on the roll-out of the digital IUU catch certification scheme as a tool to protect our market, our consumers and fishers against imports of IUU fish from third countries. Second, I believe that protecting our market from IUU fishing imports is not enough. I therefore intend to continue with an active IUU diplomacy with third countries. The IUU carding system proved a strong tool and under my mandate I intend to guide and help third countries towards sound fisheries controls and compliance, but I will not hesitate to recommend all types of measures foreseen in our legislation if needed.

A level playing field at the service of sustainability of fisheries worldwide extends beyond fisheries management measures. We must consider how the EU – a large importer of aquatic products – trades with the rest of the world. If confirmed, I intend to put a strong emphasis on the various tools at the disposal of the EU to leverage its market power, whether in terms of traceability of imported products and relevant information to consumers, or in the context of joint fisheries management with third countries or our trade policy instruments. One of the most fundamental changes I aim for under my mandate is to put an end to public subsidies enhancing fishing capacities, through a new World Trade Organisation agreement. I will closely work with the Commissioner for Trade to that effect.

6. How do you intend to coordinate all relevant policies within the European Oceans Pact and to involve coastal communities and the fisheries and aquaculture sectors in the process of designing and implementing the Pact?

Today, our ocean faces multiple crises, which also makes it a challenge for the coastal communities and blue economy sectors that depend on the ocean's health for their livelihood and prosperity. Therefore, we need to look holistically at how we interact with the ocean: how we impact the ocean, how the ocean impacts us, as well as at the opportunities that we can harvest from the ocean, acknowledging its importance in terms of geopolitics, food sovereignty, competitiveness, sustainability, and climate change mitigation, all intrinsically linked to global welfare.

I am confident that if confirmed as Commissioner, I will be able to rely on the cooperation of all Commissioners in designing and taking forward the European Oceans Pact as single strategic reference framework for the ocean. I will lead this task and seek specifically the contribution of my fellow Commissioners in charge of environment, water resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy, of transport, of energy and housing, of trade, of climate and of the Executive Vice- President for cohesion and reforms.

The European Oceans Pact needs to be inclusive and co-created with all relevant stakeholders. I will seek such inclusiveness in particular through the Fisheries and Oceans Dialogues and other in-depth consultations including with the Honorable Members of the European Parliament. The European Maritime Day, hosted every year by a different European coastal city, is an important platform for stakeholders to meet and engage on ocean-related issues, including on the European Oceans Pact. In order to multiply engagement at local level all across our Union, this will be complemented by local initiatives in various Member States through "European Maritime Day in my country" events. In all this, I will make sure to involve the younger generations. I will also continue reaching out to the coastal communities, including the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, and engaging stakeholders not only in designing the Pact, but also when rolling it out on the ground and in our future policies.

If confirmed, I will endeavor to present the European Oceans Pact in time for the third UN Ocean Conference in Nice, in June 2025 and thus reinforce the leading role of the EU in setting the global ocean agenda.

7. How will you strengthen the European sustainable aquaculture sector, including the algae production, and improve consumers´ information through labelling on the origin of products, or of plant-based products sold as fish?

Sustainable aquaculture, including algae production, plays an important role in ensuring a sustainable supply of aquatic food in the European Union. If confirmed as a Commissioner, I will step up efforts towards the full implementation of the vision of a more competitive, resilient and sustainable EU aquaculture, which was set out in the Commission Strategic Guidelines on EU aquaculture adopted in 2021. This will not only increase aquaculture's contribution to EU food sovereignty, but also contribute to the green transition, improving social acceptance and information to the consumer, and increasing knowledge and innovation. To achieve these objectives, action is required in a wide range of areas, from simplifying regulations and licensing procedures, allocating appropriate space for aquaculture to grow, adapting aquaculture to the impact of climate change, or ensuring that innovation is taken up by the sector.

The Commission already undertook several actions to realise the important potential of sustainable aquaculture growth in the EU in line with this strategy. An online platform with extensive knowledge relevant to the sustainable development of the sector has been set up, and guidelines on best practices have already been and will continue to be developed in key areas such as streamlining regulatory and administrative frameworks, planning space for marine aquaculture, adaptation to climate change, energy transition, planning of space and access to water for freshwater and land-based aquaculture, as well as improving environmental performance and fish welfare. Work on fish welfare will be supported by the new EU Reference Centre for aquatic animal welfare established in February 2024.

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Council and the European Parliament to ensure that this sector is given sufficient priority and that the full potential of aquaculture can be seized in the EU. I will use the 2025 mid-term assessment of the implementation of the Strategic Guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture to assess where we are in terms of implementation of this vision as well as its actual impact. Based on this assessment, I will consider whether and which additional measures are required to achieve the objectives. This assessment will also contribute to the evaluation of the CFP Regulation and to the vision for fisheries and aquaculture for 2040. Sustainable aquaculture will also be a key aspect of the European Oceans Pact. Moreover, in early 2025, I will launch a communication campaign to increase awareness, understanding and acceptance of aquaculture in the EU.

The Commission adopted a specific EU Algae initiative in 2022 aimed at supporting the sustainable production, safe consumption, and innovative use of algae in the EU. If confirmed, I will raise the awareness of the benefits of a strong algae sector in the EU and support the implementation of the 23 actions established in this initiative, including those aimed at streamlining licensing and allocation of maritime space, as well as raising awareness about algae benefits to people and the planet and conducting policy research and analysis.

I will also ensure that aquaculture – including algae - is part of our research and innovation efforts and support, also through the Ocean Research and Innovation Strategy that I will develop, if I am confirmed as Commissioner.

Clear and reliable consumer information through labelling is vital for empowering consumers to make informed purchasing decisions that support sustainable choices. Origin information is particularly valuable to consumers, as it gives them the transparency they need to make choices. By knowing where their seafood comes from, consumers can actively support local fishing communities, including small-scale operators. The Regulation on the Common Organisation of the Markets in Fishery and Aquaculture Products (CMO) addresses consumer information

requirements. The Regulation provides that products sold in the EU must be labelled with key information, such as the species name, production method, the area where the product was caught or farmed, and the type of fishing gear used. However, these requirements do not apply to processed products, which are exempt from providing detailed information, for example about the origin of the raw materials used.

The current evaluation of the CFP will also address CMO provisions and examine whether the existing labelling rules provide consumers with adequate information, or if additional requirements are needed to better inform their purchasing decisions. I am committed to look specifically into this question following the evaluation.

In parallel, I will continue working with Member States for a seamless implementation of the traceability provisions under the recently revised fisheries control rules, which will gradually extend to prepared and preserved products and embrace technological progress and the simplification that comes with the transition to a digital system.

It is also important to acknowledge the vital role that Member States play in ensuring that labelling requirements are implemented effectively on the ground. If confirmed, I will collaborate with Member States to explore ways for them to strengthen their enforcement and control systems, so that all products, including those imported from outside the EU, comply with our labelling rules and provide consumers with accurate information. I am committed to addressing the concerns of EU producers and consumer and promote a level playing field for all products, regardless of their origin.

Plant-based products are a growing but still very small market. Plant-based products must be clearly recognisable as such, thanks to appropriate consumer information. To that extent, I will launch in 2025 an online information scoring system, empowering EU actors in the supply chain, as well as consumers, to make sustainable choices based on sustainability product scores for certain stocks.

Question from the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

8. How do you plan to ensure that protecting marine ecosystems and ocean biodiversity goes hand in hand with a sustainable, economically viable, and competitive European blue economy? What will you do to ensure that all marine protected areas are effectively managed in line with the nature-related legislation and EU's international commitments? What actions do you envisage to substantially reduce marine litter and tackle marine and freshwater pollution, and how will you promote these efforts internationally? How do you plan to enhance the EU's blue carbon potential and accelerate the restoration and protection of high carbon-sequestration ecosystems such as mangroves, seagrasses, and salt marshes as part of your broader climate adaptation strategy? How will you make sure that the blue economy sectors, such as offshore renewable technologies, are coordinated through maritime spatial planning to avoid conflicts with marine conservation efforts, sustainable fisheries, and coastal community interests? Considering the current EU position on deep-sea mining, which advocates for a precautionary approach pending further scientific research, what are your intentions regarding this issue? How will you ensure that the EU continues to lead in setting global standards, securing consensus on the implementation of the BBNJ Treaty and other ocean governance frameworks, and promoting SDG 14 objectives?

A healthy ocean is a productive ocean. If confirmed as Commissioner, I will make sure we continue implementing effective and science-based conservation measures, such as marine protected areas and more sustainable fishing practices. Proper implementation and enforcement of the EU acquis as well as with the EU's international obligations will remain essential.

It will also be crucial to ensure that maritime spatial planning enables to balance the protection of our ocean and the profitability of activities at sea. I will notably pay specific attention to the opportunities offered by the multi-use of marine space, by design.

If confirmed, I will encourage the use of tools such as "BlueInvest", to support innovation and entrepreneurship in sustainable technologies and business models, which I believe is also crucial. As a specific example, I would like to mention our EU Algae Initiative which aims to support development and scaling up of regenerative aquaculture in the EU that, on the one hand, provides low carbon products for the EU market and, on the other hand, removes excess nutrients and carbon thus reducing ocean eutrophication and acidification.

Finally, by promoting responsible consumption patterns, we can create demand for sustainable products and support a healthy ocean economy.

This approach, with the various work strands above coming together under the upcoming European Oceans Pact, will create conditions for a competitive and economically viable blue economy for the future while maintaining and even restoring the health of our ocean.

The environmental dimension is embedded in the Common Fisheries Policy and its objectives. It complements the strong legal framework on nature protection and restoration already in place. This includes the Habitats Directive and Birds Directive, which are the foundation of the Natura 2000 network covering also many marine protected areas; the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, which seeks to ensure the good environmental status for all marine waters and requires Member States to develop and implement specific measures for the management and protection of marine protected areas, ensuring they contribute to overall marine biodiversity goals. Finally, the recently adopted Nature Restoration Regulation will also be essential in restoring degraded marine ecosystems and building on their resilience.

If I am confirmed as Commissioner, I will closely work with the Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy to make sure Member States implement relevant legislation in order to achieve the strategic objective of the 2030 Biodiversity Strategy to have 30% of EU seas protected, 10% of which under strict protection and to ensure that all our marine protected areas have the relevant fisheries management measures in place by 2030.

I will encourage the Member States to make full use of the opportunities that the CFP as well as the maritime spatial planning directive offer to implement effective measures and planning in support of the objectives of each marine protected area, so that we can limit the impact of economic activities on the marine ecosystems while providing the conditions for strong and resilient sectors and coastal communities. This also includes support measures for the decarbonisation of the fleet.

Our seas are heavily impacted by what happens on our land. Nutrients largely from agriculture cause eutrophication in the marine environment. The majority of plastic marine litter is land-based. This causes health concerns and degrades our marine environment. It also creates unnecessary impacts and costs for industries that depend on the sea, such as fishing and tourism. This is why, if I am confirmed, I will work with the Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy, both in context of the Water Resilience Strategy– and on the European Oceans Pact that I will lead, to ensure that our rivers, seas and coastal areas are healthy and resilient. This will also feed into the work on climate adaptation.

From 2026, Member States must include wetlands, including blue carbon, in the emissions inventories they provide to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and in their targets for the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry Regulation. Under the Nature Restoration Regulation, they must ensure that 90% of marine ecosystems habitats are in good condition and, for that purpose, they must put in place restoration measures on at least 30% of the total area that is not in good condition by 2030.

If confirmed, I will develop a plan for a common EU approach for collecting and processing the necessary data in order to assess the role of blue carbon and other wetlands in reaching EU's climate and nature goals. This will facilitate the building of new business models based on incentives for existing activities such as aquaculture to co-exist with nature and contribute to reductions in greenhouse gas emission. It will allow the creation of new innovative activities such as certification of carbon removals.

If confirmed as Commissioner, I will strengthen our approach to maritime spatial planning to help optimise the different uses of the sea and the ocean's economic potential, while safeguarding its health and resilience.

The Maritime Spatial Planning Directive already requires Member States to use the ecosystem based approach, which is a core element of EU marine environmental protection laws (notably the Marine Strategy Framework Directive).

Yet, we need to do more to help Member States putting all these principles into practice and the European Oceans Pact will be important in this respect.

At EU level, I will organise Fisheries and Oceans Dialogues, notably to discuss spatial use of the sea, building on the good work of the Blue Forum for users of the sea. I will continue to work closely with Member States to deliver and make sure our policy is fit for the challenges and spatial targets up to 2050.

All this will represent the EU contribution to the achievement of the relevant sustainable development goal (SDG 14) as regards its biodiversity and pollution reduction targets and will enable it to continue leading in setting global standards. Mirroring the effort at EU level on the global scale will also ensure the buy-in from our own blue economy sectors. Concretely, I will champion the global efforts for ocean protection and restoration and meet the global commitment of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Agreement to protect at least 30% of the ocean by 2030. If confirmed, it will be my priority to continue advocating that each marine protected area in the high seas has a specific management plan and that adequate resources be allocated to ensure the effective implementation of these plans, including monitoring and enforcement and the creation of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the Southern Ocean. I will also mobilise EU ocean diplomacy to encourage the swift ratification and entry into force of the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) agreement, which establishes a procedure for designating Marine Protected Areas in areas beyond national jurisdictions. My first strategic objective, if confirmed as Commissioner, will be contributing to diplomatic efforts to achieve 60 ratifications needed for its entry into force, hopefully by the third UN Ocean Conference in June 2025.

Regional and international cooperation are also key to mitigate the impacts of pollution on our seas and ocean. I believe it is crucial that the EU continues to be a catalyst for change, be it by being vocal and instrumental in the final negotiations of the Global Plastic Treaty or by deepening our cooperation at regional level, including in the work of the Regional Seas Conventions, Regional Fisheries Management Organisations or through our International Ocean Governance agenda.

Finally, the position of the Commission on deep-sea mining is set in the EU's International Ocean Governance agenda. The Commission advocates for prohibiting deep-sea mining until scientific gaps are properly filled, that it can be demonstrated that no harmful effects arise from mining and, as required under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, that the necessary provisions in the exploitation regulations for the effective protection of the marine environment are in place. I fully agree with this position and, if confirmed as Commissioner, I will defend this in all relevant outreach at international level.