

POLICY BRIEF 12

EXTRA-SMES
Interreg Europe



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund



Eco-labelling in aquaculture

THE EXTRA-SMES PROJECT/	2
POLICY BRIEF OVERVIEW/	3
THE ECO-LABELLING SYSTEM/	4
COMPARING ECO-LABELS/	5
CHOOSING THE MOST SUITABLE ECO-LABEL/	6
PROJECT PARTNERS/	7

THE EXTRA-SMES PROJECT

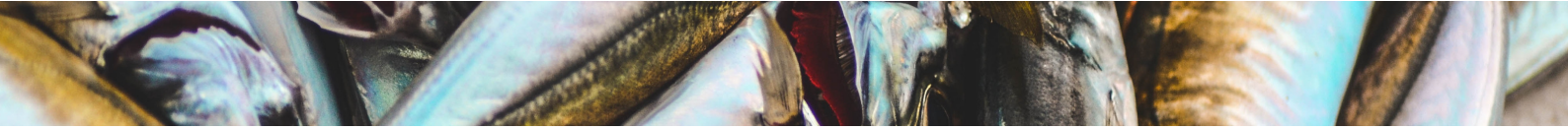
The EXTRA-SMES is an Interreg Europe project that aims to foster the competitiveness, extraversion, and internationalization of rural and coastal SMEs participating in aquaculture value chains.

To that end, the project assists 8 relevant public authorities and businesses in the aquaculture value chain from 7 countries to join forces and exchange experiences on how aquaculture SMEs could:

- Simplify administrative procedures.
- Expand their access to new markets.
- Innovate by producing value-added products and solutions.
- Up-skill their personnel.
- Resolve conflicts of interest together with stakeholders.



POLICY BRIEF OVERVIEW



This policy brief reports on the main points of the Input Paper drafted by the University of Patras in the context of the EXTRA-SMEs Activity 3.2 “Interregional workshop on promoting relevant EU labels among EXTRA-SMEs”, which was conducted in the presence of all EXTRA-SMEs partners, members of their stakeholder groups, and external experts.

Its focus was on **eco-labelling schemes** with the aim of raising awareness of their functionality and utility in ensuring **transparency** throughout the seafood value chain as well as long-term **sustainability** for both consumers and producers.

The last section lists the conclusions of the comparative analysis conducted by the University of Patras, which attempts to identify the most suitable eco-labelling scheme for aquaculture.

The conclusions of this policy brief can be consulted by SMEs and relevant actors operating in the aquaculture sector in order to boost eco-labelling in their regions and reap its benefits.

THE ECO-LABELLING SYSTEM



What is eco-labelling?

“Eco-labelling” is a voluntary method of environmental performance certification that is practiced around the world. It is awarded to products and services that meet high environmental criteria throughout their lifecycle (from production to consumption).

Benefits

- Customers are able to identify “environmentally preferable” products and/ or services, leading to more **transparency, credibility** as well as **sustainable consumption patterns**.
- It promotes **competition among providers**, as it is a means of measuring performance and marketing the environmental qualifications of a product.
- A dynamic market for eco-labelled products encourages **corporate commitment to continuous environmental improvement**; when customers choose eco-labelled products, they have a direct impact on supply and demand in the marketplace guiding the market towards greater environmental awareness.

COMPARING ECO-LABELS

The Input Paper provided a **comparative analysis** of EU eco-label schemes with a view to identifying the most suitable for aquaculture SMEs who would wish to choose eco-labelling. The EU eco-label schemes under comparison were the "EU Ecolabel, Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC)", "Friend of the Sea (FoS)", "Naturland e.V.", and "Nordic Ecolabel".

The analysis focused on the **certification process** and the **application and costs** for each scheme. Despite the common grounds that exist between the analyzed eco-labelling schemes, several distinctions have been identified, the most important of which are listed below:

- The **EU Ecolabel** provides the most accessible information to consumers since it is easily recognizable and reliable for all EU Member States.
- The **ASC** is the only scheme that provides the option of group certification and enables smaller-scale producers to join as a group and share the costs and resources involved.
- Once the product is certified, **FoS** supports companies through co-marketing and communication activities to improve the visibility of certified brands.
- **Naturland** covers areas not governed by the EU eco-regulation, such as social standards.

CHOOSING THE MOST SUITABLE ECO-LABEL



Based on the findings, **the most suitable scheme for aquaculture SMEs is the EU Ecolabel scheme**, as it has the potential to offer two significant advantages to SMEs that operate within the EU:

- The **EU Ecolabel scheme is the cheapest option for aquaculture SMEs** since in their case, the one-off application fee and the annual fee payable to the Competent Body that processes the application are up to 200-600 EUR.
- It is a label introduced and **operated by the European Union** and, therefore, it is **recognized among consumers**, boosting SMEs' competitiveness at the European level.

PROJECT PARTNERS



**Region of Peloponnese
(EL)**



Liguria Region (IT)



**Northern Chamber of
Commerce in Szczecin
(PL)**



**Bucharest-Ilfov Regional
Development Agency
(RO)**



**Lapland University of
Applied Sciences (FI)**



University of Patras (EL)



**Western Development
Commission (IE)**



**Liguria Cluster for
Marine Technologies
(IT)**



**Public institution
National Regions
Development Agency
(LT)**

About Us

EXTRA-SMEs is co-funded by INTERREG Europe / European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

Contact Us

Project email: extrasmes2018@gmail.com
Web: www.interregeurope.eu/extra-smes/

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