Feedback by EFFOP to *"European Ocean Research and Innovation Strategy"*

EFFOP welcomes the European Commission's initiative to develop a European Ocean Research and Innovation Strategy and supports its overall objectives of strengthening Europe's leadership in ocean science, innovation, sustainability and competitiveness.

As the Commission develops this strategy, EFFOP encourages an approach that is firmly grounded in scientific evidence, measurable sustainability outcomes, and the principles of innovation neutrality.

In this regard, we believe the strategy would benefit from a stronger recognition of the role that blue foods and marine ingredients can play in Europe's future food system within the One Health framework.

Marine ingredients provide essential nutrients that contribute to both human and animal health, while supporting sustainable food production systems with lower carbon footprints. As the EU seeks to strengthen food security, resilience and sustainability, blue foods should be recognised as strategic assets that can contribute to multiple policy objectives simultaneously, including ocean health, nutrition, climate action and economic development.

We also encourage the Commission to ensure that future ocean research and innovation programmes remain technology-neutral and evidence-based. Public research funding should support the development and scaling of solutions that can demonstrate clear sustainability benefits, irrespective of whether they are based on established industries, emerging technologies or new business models.

Furthermore, while support for emerging sectors is important, innovation policy should also recognise and strengthen existing sustainable marine industries that are already delivering measurable environmental benefits. The European marine ingredients sector, for example, is among the most circular food production systems in Europe, making extensive use of by-products and trimmings, while maintaining a low carbon footprint and producing high-value nutritional solutions.

These existing circular value chains represent successful examples of sustainable resource utilisation and should continue to be included in research, innovation and investment priorities. The strategy should therefore promote innovation across the full spectrum of sustainable marine sectors.

Finally, we consider it essential that future funding decisions and research priorities are guided by measurable environmental, nutritional and socioeconomic outcomes. Transparent, science-based assessment criteria should remain the foundation for public investment decisions to ensure that limited resources are directed towards solutions capable of delivering the greatest overall sustainability benefits for society, the environment and the European economy.

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