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Towards a strong and sustainable EU algae sector

European Parliament resolution of 11 May 2023 towards a strong and sustainable EU algae sector (2023/2547(RSP))

(C/2023/1074)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Commission communications on the 'European Green Deal' (COM(2019)0640), the 'Farm to Fork strategy' (COM(2020)0381) and the 'Sustainable blue economy' (COM(2021)0240),

— having regard to its resolutions on the three aforementioned Commission communications ([1]) ([2]) ([3]),

— having regard to the Commission communication on the 'Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030' (COM(2021)0236),

— having regard to its resolution of 4 October 2022 on striving for a sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture: the way forward ([4]),

— having regard to the question to the Commission on 'Towards a strong and sustainable EU algae sector' (O-000015/2023 — B9-0018/2023),

— having regard to Rules 136(5) and 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on Fisheries,

1. Welcomes the Commission communication entitled 'Towards a strong and sustainable EU algae sector' (COM(2022)0592) and agrees that there is untapped potential in this sector; points out that, while the overall demand for algae is expected to increase in the coming years, an additional 85 000 jobs could be created in the EU if the projected increase in algae production is achieved;

2. Welcomes the objective of developing markets for food and non-food algae applications and making them accessible to the general public; highlights that algae could also be used for animal and fish feed, pharmaceuticals, packaging, cosmetics and biofuels, among other purposes;

3. Points out that the sector needs to develop in a way that does not affect the equilibrium of marine ecosystems and should avoid repeating the same environmental mistakes that have previously been made on land;

4. Underlines that a growing EU algae sector could contribute to the achievement of the EU's objectives in terms of developing a blue economy, which would not only provide us with new low-carbon food products and material, but also contribute to ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration and nutrient absorption, as well as reducing pollution, thus contributing to the regeneration of our coastal ecosystems; believes, in this regard, that more EU funds need to be mobilised for research purposes;

([1]) European Parliament resolution of 15 January 2020 on the European Green Deal (OJ C 270, 7.7.2021, p. 2).
([2]) European Parliament resolution of 20 October 2021 on a farm to fork strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system (OJ C 184, 5.5.2022, p. 2).
([3]) European Parliament resolution of 3 May 2022 toward a sustainable blue economy in the EU: the role of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors (OJ C 465, 6.12.2022, p. 2).
([4]) OJ C 132, 14.4.2023, p. 2.

5. Points out that algae and microalgae can represent an important complementary source of protein in sustainable food production and global food security, as highlighted in the Farm to Fork strategy, and calls on the Commission to consider this untapped potential in its review of the EU protein policy;

6. Notes that the communication identifies vast areas in Europe suitable for seaweed cultivation; recognises the need for Member States to integrate algae cultivation into their national or regional spatial plans under the Directive for maritime spatial planning ([5]);

7. Believes that more needs to be done to provide more information about algae production methods and market conditions, and a more cohesive policy framework is needed in order to reduce the obstacles hindering the algae sector's growth; highlights the need for further research in order to maximise the sector's potential to contribute positively to the environment, both in terms of climate mitigation and as blue carbon sinks;

8. Calls for a more coherent regulatory framework for the sector, encouraging Member States to set up 'one-stop shops' for actors interested in starting or expanding algae farming operations;

9. Welcomes the Commission's envisaged actions to develop standards for different types of algae-based products and its commitment to developing a new toolkit for algae farmers; equally welcomes the intention to develop specific guidance to promote complementing fish-based feed with algae-based feed; welcomes the proposal to fund pilot projects for fishers seeking to develop seaweed farming;

10. Considers that income diversification and the creation of new opportunities for coastal communities when developing ocean farming should be seen as a positive complement to sustainable fishing practices;

11. Welcomes the intention to conduct awareness-raising activities in order to increase consumer knowledge of algae-based products; notes that the EU4Ocean platform could, jointly with the Member States, raise awareness in schools and universities about the potential of the blue economy;

12. Calls on the Commission to provide adequate funding for the EU algae sector, and on the Member States to continue encouraging the promotion of algae farming and to facilitate the use and development of algae as food and feed, notably by implementing speedier authorisation processes, without neglecting other aquaculture-farmed species;

13. Welcomes the Commission's intention to present a specific initiative to support algae consumption in the EU;

14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission.

([5]) Directive 2014/89/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning (OJ L 257, 28.8.2014, p. 135).