

ANIMAL WELFARE & AQUATIC FOOD SYSTEMS



Neglecting animal welfare and relying on unsustainable aquatic food production threatens progress toward SDG 14 targets, which aim to protect and sustainably use oceans. Targets include reducing overfishing, tackling marine pollution, and ensuring the sustainable use of marine resources.

50-100 bn

farmed fish slaughtered
yearly, mostly without
effective stunning

~70%

of global fish stocks
are fully exploited or
overfished

1 in 3

wild-caught fish
used as animal feed,

CHALLENGES

Reliance on carnivorous fish like salmon & seabass has increased demand for fishmeal and wild-caught feed.

Fishmeal & fish oil production has diverted nutrient-rich fish from direct human consumption, worsening food insecurity.

Limited legal recognition of aquatic animal sentience and intensification of aquaculture with minimal environmental and welfare safeguards has led to systemic welfare neglect, disease, escapes & ecosystem degradation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

→ Shift to fish that require minimal fish-based feed, like tilapia and carp to align better with welfare & sustainability goals.

→ Invest in algae-based feed and regenerative ocean farming to reduce pressure on wild stocks and restore habitats.

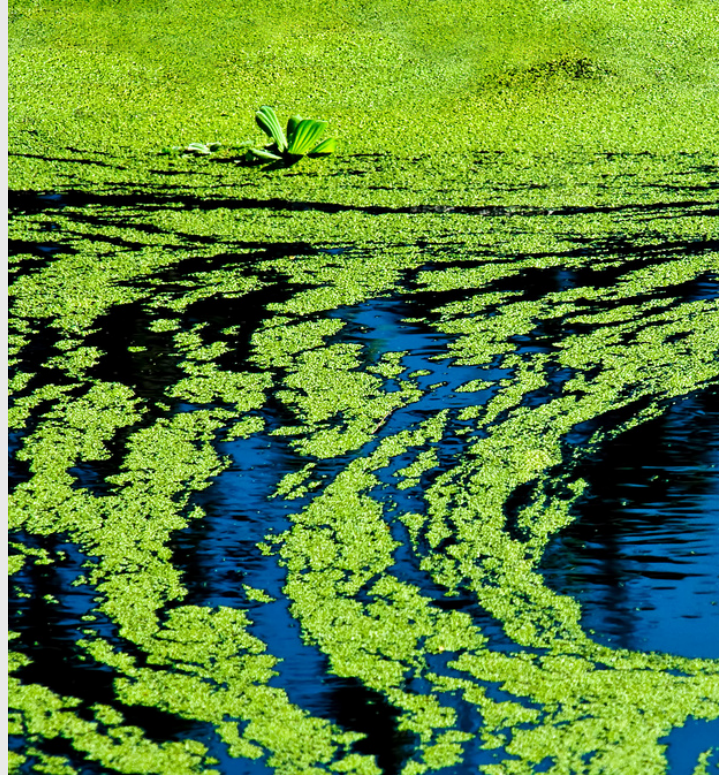
→ Adopt species-specific welfare guidelines, including mandatory pre-slaughter stunning.

INTERNATIONAL POLICY GUIDANCE

- **WOAH Aquatic Animal Health Code** includes welfare considerations for transport and slaughter of aquatic animals. These guidelines can serve as a minimum benchmark to promote global recognition of aquatic animal sentience and the need for species-specific protections.
- **CBD - Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (2022)** calls for sustainable use and protection of aquatic biodiversity (Targets 5, 9, and 10). Recognising animal sentience and welfare is integral to biodiversity protection aligns with the “mainstreaming biodiversity” agenda.
- **FAO Blue Transformation Roadmap (2022–2030)** emphasises sustainable aquatic food systems, but must integrate animal welfare.
- **WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (2022)** aims to eliminate harmful subsidies that contribute to overfishing and IUU fishing → while not focused on animal welfare, it creates space for civil society to push for public support to be redirected toward higher-welfare, lower-impact systems.
- **EU Farm to Fork Strategy & Green Deal** support sustainable aquaculture development — a chance to advocate for welfare integration.

CAN ALGAE CULTIVATION OFFER A PROMISING ALTERNATIVE TO TRADITIONAL AQUACULTURE?

- ✓ Requires no freshwater, fertilizers, or arable land - making it one of the most resource-efficient proteins
- ✓ Can replace fishmeal and fish oil, reducing reliance on wild fish and supporting higher-welfare aquaculture
- ✓ Improves marine ecosystems by absorbing nutrients and enhancing biodiversity when cultivated
- ✓ Offers climate co-benefits: carbon sequestration, coastal protection, and livelihood opportunities



SCAN FOR SOURCES & REFERENCES

All WFA policy recommendations are evidence-based — ensuring better outcomes for people, animals, and the planet.