

## NOTES overall

### Workshop: The Dos and Dont's of Permits in Low-Trophic Aquaculture

**Date:** Wednesday, November 15th, 2023

**Theme:** Policy & Regulation

organised by:



Low trophic aquaculture, or the farming of aquatic plants and animals more down in the food web (e.g. mussels and algae), has enormous potential to help solve some of the challenges we face, such as eutrophication, food security and climate change. However, unlocking the sector's full potential still requires coordinated action on all levels to provide the necessary legal framework and permits for production. Long and complicated licensing procedures often hinder the establishment or scale-up of farms. Besides, insufficient consideration in Maritime Spatial Plans results in a lack of suitable sites. Low public awareness or false information about low trophic aquaculture, mainly when not distinguished from fish aquaculture, limits public support for the sector's development.

Tim Staufenberger from the German Kieler Meeresfarm GmbH provided insights into the application process of his mussel and algae farm, which included interactions with four different authorities and a final application of more than 80 pages as well as the necessity to search for submerged munition from the World Wars.

Susanna Minnhagen, from the Swedish mussel farm Ecopelag, shared their recent and positive experiences with the local authorities when taking over and expanding a mussel farm site in the Västervik archipelago. The process from planning to the approval of the permit included stakeholder discussions with water owners, fishers and a regional interest association.

Annette Løttrup-Moore from Business Lolland-Falster, Denmark, working closely with local businesses, educational institutions and interest organisations to create opportunities and optimal conditions for regional companies, emphasised their strong interest in low trophic aquaculture. The conditions would be excellent with 600 km of coastline and the necessary infrastructure. Still, a temporary halt to new applications for mussel and oyster cultivation permits, introduced by the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration on July 1st, 2021, made applying for a new license impossible. Additionally, in the Maritime Spatial Plan launched in 2023, minimal space for aquaculture was allocated.

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Per Dolmer, from [Blue Research](#), who helped Guldborgsund Municipality to point out suitable areas for low trophic aquaculture around Lolland-Falster, continued the session by presenting different forms of mussel farming for food, feed or nature restoration, including compensation farming, which entails payments for ecosystem services. This form would require an entirely new legal and management framework. He also explained the reasons for the decreased social acceptance of mussel farming in Denmark in recent years and the necessity to raise awareness of the positive impacts and improve mussel production's reputation by communicating correct data and information to the public.

Joachim Hjerl from [Havhøst – Ocean Harvest](#) presented their mussel cultivation kit, allowing everyone to produce mussels as a hobby, on their own or in their community gardens. Havhøst developed with local authorities the possibility of a simplified application process and a one-page template for applying for a permit that allows noncommercial low-trophic aquaculture activities in Denmark.

## **Key points and suggestions from the workshop:**

1. “One-stop” application (one authority is responsible for the whole process and coordinating with other authorities concerned).
2. Adapted application process by size: simplified process for hobby activities and small-size farms.
3. Decoupling permits and discussions for low-trophic aquaculture from fish farming and agriculture nutrient inputs.
4. Increase social acceptance by raising awareness of the environmental benefits of low-trophic aquaculture and by pointing out the differences from fish aquaculture.