
Norwegian policy to promote a climate smart seafood industry

By Andreas Stokseth, Min of Trade, Industries and Fisheries

Good morning from Oslo everybody!

My name is Andreas Stokseth. I am working as a Senior advisor in the Section for Marine Research in the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries.

In our section we are responsible for marine research funding and policy, funding and management of research institutes such as Inst of Marine Research, The Nofima Food Research Institute and Veterinary Institute. Furthermore we are responsible for marine research cooperations with EU, The Fisheries Cooperation under of the Nordic Council of Ministers, and various bilateral partners.

We are also much involved in the UN Ocean Science Decade for Sustainable development, and the work of the High Level Panel for Sustainable Ocean Economy co-chaired by our Prime Minister to name a few central tasks.

As you know we have a new Government in Norway, who has just taken office. It will take som time for this newly elected government to get to grips with all its responsibilities. Yet I can assure that policies to address the challenges of climate change figures high on the agenda.

In fact the newly appointed Minister of Industry and Trade has clearly stated that industry and the business community will have to play a centre role in the transition to a green economy. A key question in all business development projects should therefore be to what extent it will contribute to cuts in emissions.

Four your information the portifolio of the previous Minister of Fisheries and Seafood has been considerably enlarged beyond fisheries and aquaculture. The portifolio now also includes responsibilities for maritime and coastal affairs, and emergency preparednes at sea such as oil spill, as well as international coordination of ocean policies. This is reflected in his new title as Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

For this short presentation I am fortunate to capitalize on a recent adress by the Minister on a marine climate conference. This allows me to present a brief and up to date overview of the integration of the new governments policy on climate change into management of the aquaculture and fisheries industry.

First of all though, would like to point out that Norway will have the honour to hold the presidency of Nordic Council of Ministers next year. We are fully committed to the vision of the Nordics as the most sustainable and integrated region of the world. This vision also applies to the Nordic seas, which of course is a big and important part of the nordic region. Ocean climate and sustainability issues thus has a firm and central place in the programme for the presidency programme. Norway is keen to bring the big issues of the international ocean agenda into the context of Nordic cooperation.

As an overall domestic goal Norway is committed to a 55% reduction in climate gas emission by 2030, measured against the level of 1990, and these emissions are to be made nationally. To achieve this target reductions must be made in all sectors of the industry, including of course the seafood industry.

Seafood production leaves a relatively low carbon footprint when compared to most meat production. However, consumers and traders are becoming ever more concerned with the origin of food and the climate and environmental impact of food production. The seafood industry increasingly has to be able to document sustainability and carbon footprint for import authorities, dealers and consumers. And there are clearly room for improvements. The Norwegian government is therefore committed to contribute to innovation, and supports new ways to organize production and as well as application of new technology in the seafood industry.

The broad and general picture on Norwegian policies with regard to climate gas emissions in aquaculture and fisheries is that considerable funding will be allocated to three areas of marine research that can have high positive effects on reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the future. The first one is research into alternative and more sustainably produced ingredients for aquaculture fish feed. The second is R&D in green shipping and technology, which in fact have put Norway and the nordics in the forefront of this development. The third is research into cooling and frozen fish technology as an alternative to the fresh fish/airfreight strategy which has been a major culprit in driving the size of the carbon footprint of the salmon industry.

Turning to the specifics of Aquaculture - there are already government funds available for the aquaculture industry motivated to reduce emissions:

Aquaculture operator can apply for state support for switching to electric powering of facilities and supply wessels. So far the renewable energy fund Enova has provide support for 130 such projects to aquaculture feed barges. In addition 60 – 70% of ongoing facilities are connected to the national grid. Enova has also supported battery installation in more than a hundred aquaculture supply wessels. The main turning point in this transition was in 2020, when Enova provided support for more than 40 such projects

A major part of the emissions from aquaculture production however happens outside the country: At the current level of salmon production in Norway more than 1,6 mill tons of fish feed, comprizing mostly imported ingredients, is required. More than 70%

of the emissions from the industry can be attributed to feed production and feed transport. In order to reduce emissions alternative, sustainable feed resources have to be identified and developed.

Development of alternative feed ingredients such as mesopelagic fish resources, microalgae, single cell protein, insects, and so forth, can contribute significantly to reducing the carbon footprint of the salmon industry. An additional point is that development of national feed ingredients industry, for instance in replacement of soy imports, will contribute to national employment and increased value adding.

Consequently the ambition of the government is that all feed to the national industry is based on sustainably produced ingredients by 2030. To achieve this aim current regulations will be revised if necessary, support for research into alternative ingredients will be provided, and a research program for production of sustainable feed based on national resources will be established.

If we turn to fisheries - the picture of emissions are somewhat simpler than for the aquaculture industry. The emissions here primarily stems from the fishing activity of the vessels. As for the domestic shipping a CO₂ – tax applies to the fuel of the fishing fleet

This tax is to motivate for market based and cost-effective measures to reduce emissions. This is in keeping with the widely accepted polluter pays principle.

The tax is the most important norwegian instrument for cutting emissions, and in order to achieve the climate target the tax will be gradually increased up to 2000 NOK per ton CO₂ by 2033 from the current level of approximately 900 NOK.

Despite ambitious targets we have to face the realities

With regard to the fishing fleet, the adjustment to the green transition has so far been meagre and for certain types of vessels frankly non-existent.

A part of the problem has been that the storage capacity or effectivity of current battery technology has been too low. In addition the high volume of the batteries has been a challenge for many small vessels. Fortunately development in battery technology is rapid. But more research and development is required to establish practical solutions that can provide substantial cuts in emissions from all vessels

Fortunately the technological development is fast. But there's an urgent need for research and development on practical and realistic solutions that can contribute to cut emissions from most fishing vessels.

That's why we need to take a practical approach on how to reach the emission target, The policy is to engage in a dialogue with the fishing industry on how to reduce emissions while at the same time maintain the competitiveness of the industry.

The contemporary CO2 compensation scheme for the fishing fleet will be prolonged, and at the same time one will learn from experience and collect information on technology development and the potential for emission cuts

This will provide the fleet with the time required to adjust to the green transition

In the meantime financial support is available from Innovation Norway and Enova for investments in low and zero emission engines and equipment on board for shipowner ready to make the green transition in their operations.

Thank you for attention!