

Importance of aquaculture in Belgium

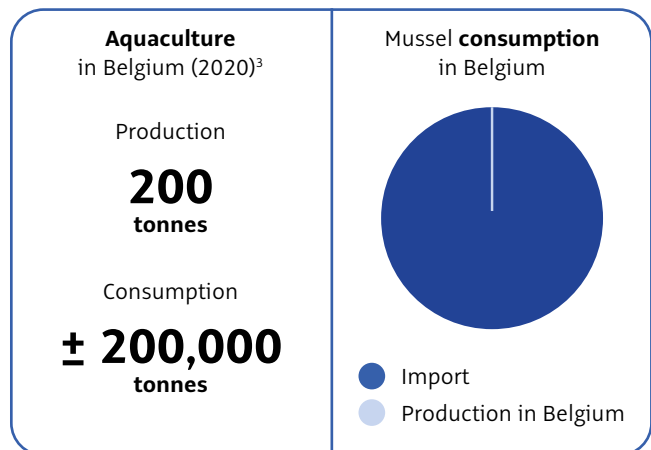


Aquaculture: the cultivation of aquatic plants and animals, such as seaweed, mussels, fish, lobsters and oysters.
Marine aquaculture: aquaculture taking place at sea.

Globally, the aquaculture sector is the **strongest growing sector within food production**. The importance of aquaculture for Belgium was also confirmed in the Belgian Strategic Plan Aquaculture (2021-2030), which aims to achieve a production capacity of as much as 425 tonnes per year¹ by 2030.

Investing in aquaculture is relevant to our country for several reasons:

- It makes Belgium less dependent on (high) imports. Currently **just about all aquaculture products are imported**, especially salmon, pangasius, mussels and tropical shrimp.²
- It creates the opportunity to increase both **quality** and **food safety** control.
- Mussels, oysters and seaweed are a solution in the search for **more sustainable sources of protein**.



Trends in aquaculture products²:

- increase in **volume** and **market share**, with greater availability by developing breeding practices
- higher **quality** and increasingly strict controls
- a **more positive attitude** toward aquaculture products, including from professional fish buyers such as restaurateurs, mainly due to the regularity of supply
- more and more aquaculture products with an **eco-label** as Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), Biogarantie (= organic guarantee), GLOBALG.A.P. or Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA)



Many **Belgian initiatives** align with the objectives of the Belgian Aquaculture Strategic Plan (2021-2030).

- Roadmap for integrated aquaculture in Flanders
- ThinkThank North Sea
- Blue Cluster
- The Marine Spatial Plan (2020-2026)
- Westdiep Sea Farm (Colruyt Group & DEME)
- ...

See also factsheet 'Innovative research on aquaculture'

Why Colruyt Group is investing in aquaculture

Colruyt Group believes in the enormous potential of aquaculture to meet the **rising demand for balanced and sustainable sources of protein**. In doing so, Colruyt Group is in the first place investing in the local cultivation of **mussels**, and eventually plans an expansion with the cultivation of other shellfish such as **oysters** and **seaweed**. With the sea farm, Colruyt Group creates **economic and social added value** for numerous players through both direct and indirect collaborations. The project may also stimulate **new investments** and additional **employment** in the Belgian aquaculture sector.



Relevance of mussel farming

Consumption of mussels in Belgium



19,997 tonnes
imports per year⁴



92%
from the Netherlands²



50%
between June and August⁵



2.2 kg
per Belgian per year²

All mussels sold in Belgium are currently imported. By investing in Belgian mussel farming, Colruyt Group can provide an important **lever its for sustainable local production** and local supply on store shelves. With its various store formats, the group is also a major player in mussel sales in Belgium.



Sea farm Colruyt Group
First sale of **Belgian mussels**

June **2023**
10-15 tonnes
4 Cru-markets

¹Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Flemish Government. (2022). Belgian Strategic Plan Aquaculture 2021 - 2030, p. 47.

²Ethic Ocean & VLIZ. (2018). Fish and seafood guide for professionals, p. 154.

³Eumofa. (2022) The EU Fish Market 2022 edition, p. 3, 5.

⁴EUMOFA, 2022.

⁵Sales figures at Bio-Planet, Colruyt Lowest Prices, Okay and Retail Partners Colruyt Group.