

# Importance of aquaculture in Belgium

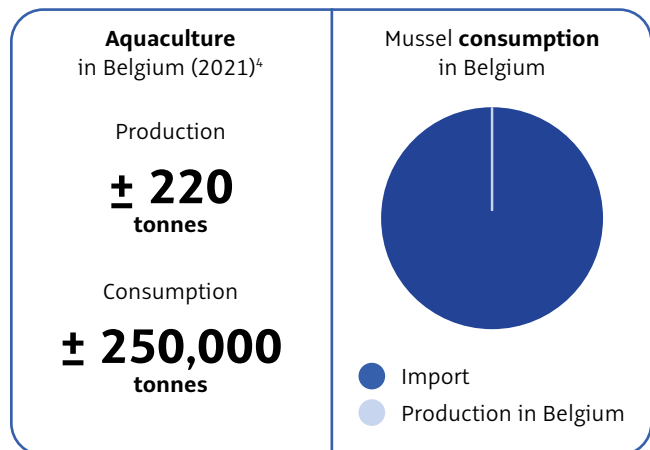


**Aquaculture:** the cultivation of aquatic plants and animals, such as seaweed, mussels, fish, lobsters and oysters.  
**Marine aquaculture:** aquaculture taking place at sea.

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 year<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>
- 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 products<sup>2</sup>:

- 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 year<sup>5</sup>



**92%**  
from the Netherlands<sup>2</sup>



**50%**  
between June and August<sup>6</sup>



**2.5 kg**  
per Belgian per year<sup>3</sup>

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**

**6 tonnes**

**4** Cru-markets

<sup>1</sup>Agency for Agriculture and Fisheries, Flemish Government. (2022). Belgian Strategic Plan Aquaculture 2021 – 2030, p. 47.

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

<sup>3</sup>Agency for Agriculture and Fisheries. (2024). Fisheries report 2024, p. 23

<sup>4</sup>EUMOFA, 2023..

<sup>5</sup>EUMOFA, 2022.

<sup>6</sup>Sales figures at Bio-Planet, Colruyt Lowest Prices, Okay and Retail Partners Colruyt Group.