



## MARITIME FORUM

# Commissioner Vella on the future of the Blue Bioeconomy in Europe

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The European Commission will announce its renewed Bioeconomy Strategy in the coming month. Bioeconomy in Europe is already composed of well-established sectors, mostly on land. The potential of the Blue Bioeconomy remains largely untapped, inspite of its riches, and of the many research projects that are now able to turn discoveries into actual products. We asked Commissioner Vella, in charge of Environment, Maritime Affairs, and Fisheries, to describe the European Commission's vision for the Blue Bioeconomy sector in the coming years.

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## **The European Bioeconomy strategy is due to be renewed soon. What place do you see for the Blue Bioeconomy in this new strategy?**

The blue bioeconomy will certainly play an important role in this renewed strategy, even more than in the previous edition. The European bio-economy is still predominantly a land-based economy, but the potential of our aquatic biological resources in terms of food, energy, medicine... is enormous. The sector develops quickly as the attention from investors, scientists and the general public is growing day by day. We also need to pay attention to the interactions and potential synergies between the land and sea based bioeconomy.

## **How can the Blue Bioeconomy contribute to achieving EU commitments to the sustainable development goals?**

Above all, I believe that researchers, policy makers and entrepreneurs working in the blue bioeconomy have to make a conscious choice to make the blue bioeconomy more circular. We need to move from an economy based on extracting value to a model focused on adding value, on keeping resources within the system for as long as possible. This includes protecting biodiversity, safeguarding the environment and fragile habitats and developing the full range of ecosystem services that our ocean can provide.

## **How will the EU support the Blue bioeconomy in the coming years?**

Already today, we support the blue bioeconomy through a wide range of actions and funding opportunities. Think about the 22 new projects that we have preselected for funding under our “sustainable blue economy call”. One of the spearheads of this Commission has been to attract the attention of private investors for the blue economy, which we have done to great success under #investEU and #BlueInvest. And of course, we have proposed to allocate EUR 10 billion to research on food and natural resources for the period 2021-2027.

## **Should stakeholders expect changes in regulations? If yes, how will it affect them?**

I believe that this Commission has been very consistent in its approach to develop the sustainable blue bioeconomy, and this will not change during the rest of the mandate. Proposals for the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, Horizon Europe,... confirm the importance of the blue bioeconomy for the EU in the future.

## **Why setting up a Blue Bioeconomy Forum now?**

The Blue Bioeconomy Forum will allow us to understand the sector even better and target our future actions. One of the most common remarks I hear from the industry is that research and demonstration projects in the blue bioeconomy often turn into spin-off start-ups, but then struggle to find the funds to bring their products to the market. For me, this is one of the priorities for the Blue Bioeconomy Forum. Then there are many other issues to tackle, and much will rely on the input from the Forum's members. So I expect strong engagement and a common determination to bring about positive change.

## **What would you like to see stakeholders achieve in the coming years?**

As I said, there are many opportunities to progress, and stakeholders will need to help us target programmes, policies and funding. Personally, I would like to see more of our companies reach the mainstream market. Citizens and companies should have better access to European blue bioeconomy products and services, and get the guarantee that when they are ‘buying blue’, they are buying

sustainable!

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