Pathways and opportunities for a better policy integration of Blue Carbon Ecosystems under the EU LULUCF Regulation

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Key Recommendations

Introduction

This policy brief, developed by the JPI Oceans Blue Carbon Knowledge Hub, presents targeted recommendations for a better policy integration of Blue Carbon Ecosystems (vegetated blue carbon ecosystems e.g., macroalgal forests and seagrass meadows and other carbon-rich systems, e.g., sediments, in deeper marine habitats) under the **EU Land Use and Land Cover Change Framework (LULUCF) Regulation.** These ecosystems play an essential role in climate change mitigation through carbon sequestration and storage and provide other climate related co-benefits, such as coastal protection from storm surges and erosion, and enhanced resilience to the impacts of ocean acidification. They also provide essential feeding and spawning grounds, nutrient cycling and air quality improvement.

The LULUCF Regulation is central to ensuring that blue carbon ecosystems are fully accounted for in the EU's climate framework. Strengthening its implementation will help integrate coastal wetlands into greenhouse gas inventories, improving recognition of their role in carbon sequestration and long-term climate mitigation.

The protection and restoration of blue carbon ecosystems for climate change mitigation and resilience aligns closely with the objectives of the EU LULUCF Regulation, which aims to enhance carbon removals and reduce emissions from land use and land-use change. Implementing these recommendations would support Member States in accounting for coastal wetlands within their greenhouse gas inventories, strengthening the role of blue carbon in achieving EU climate targets and contributing to long-term carbon neutrality goals.

Key recommendations

1. **Establish an EU-level centralised hub** to strengthen the translation of blue carbon knowledge and data into policy

2. **Expand technical capacity building and knowledge exchange, including for emerging systems** to support blue carbon integration across Member States

3. **Embed policy objectives and stakeholder consultations** into the design and planning of research projects

4. **Apply standardised approaches to inventory compilation**, including clear definitions of national boundaries and ecosystem extent

5. **Improve the accuracy of emission factors** through synthesis and further research on blue carbon ecosystem responses to human disturbances

6. Application of Tier 1 values with the **ambition to move to higher Tier levels**

7. **Advance towards IPCC Tier 3 methodologies** in the EU through harmonised and accessible national datasets

8. **Develop an EU-wide Blue Carbon Strategy** to support the objectives of the Ocean Pact

9. Adopt dedicated Blue Carbon strategies **at national level**

10. **Align blue carbon methodologies** with compliance and certification systems to unlock investment

11. **Promote blended finance approaches** to complement LULUCF accounting and leverage private capital

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The JPI Oceans Blue Carbon Knowledge Hub is led by Ireland, with Germany, Greece, Malta, Norway, Portugal and the United Kingdom as participating countries.

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