

## SEA SCREENING TEMPLATE

### Part A – Plan/Programme (PP) and Responsible Authority

Title of PP: Preparation of an Aquaculture Strategy for Malta

Responsible Authority: MRRA - MAR

Contact Person: Dr Robert Vassallo-Agius

Position: Deputising Head MAR

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Date: April 2012

### Part B – Key Facts

Responsible Authority: MRRA - MAR

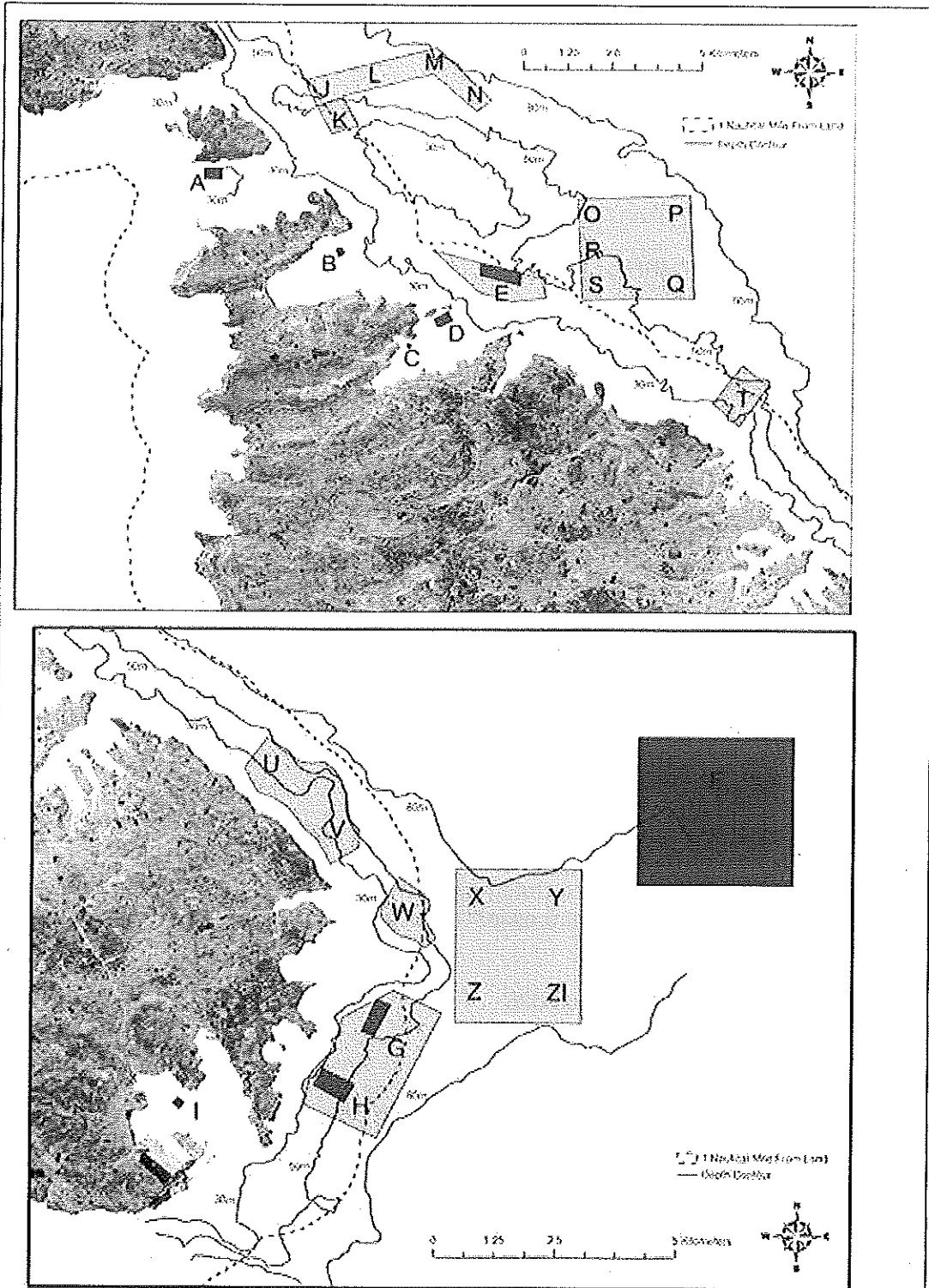
Title of PP: Preparation of an Aquaculture Strategy for Malta

Purpose of PP: To lay down a structured path for sustainably developing aquaculture and to identify the domains that are essential for a profitable and sustainable industry in Malta

Period covered by PP: Present to 2025

Envisaged Frequency of Updates:

Area covered by PP (ideally also attach map): Marine areas around Malta with new zones proposed in north and south offshore areas as indicated in green in maps below. Red zones are present aquaculture sites.



Summary of PP content: :The preparation of an Aquaculture Strategy for Malta is in line with the requirements emanating from the European Union Common Fisheries Policy and particularly the Common Organisation of the Markets. The strategy is called for by the NEP and sustainable aquaculture development is identified among the strategic objectives to be further developed through the SPED. The strategy outlines the state of the industry and the issues affecting it are brought up and recommendations and proposals for policy positions are made, Strategic objectives

are identified and associated action plans and time-frame are proposed. The recommendations and proposals are made for the presently cultured species. Additionally suggestions are proposed for diversification, the identification of sites and different production scenarios, improvements for the regulation, fish health control and environmental monitoring of the industry, research and development, human resources, socio-economic impacts, marketing strategies and improving the image of aquaculture.

Part C – SEA Criteria

SEA Criterion	Yes/No (no other answer except Yes/No)	Explanation
<p>Is the PP subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority</p> <p>OR</p> <p>prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government (Regulation 3)</p>	Y	<p>The aquaculture strategy for the Government of Malta. It presents a programme for the development of a sustainable aquaculture industry following consultations with stakeholders.</p>
<p>Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Regulation 3)</p>	Y	<p>This was an initiative by the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs to plan a pathway for the development of this industry.</p>
<p>Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use</p> <p>AND</p> <p>does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Regulation 4(2)(a))</p>	Y	<p>Fisheries</p> <p>Annex II (1) f Intensive fish farming</p>
<p>Will the PP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Articles 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Regulation 4(2)(b))</p>	Y	<p>There may be an overlap between the proposed aquaculture zones and the SAC's / SPA's. The proposed aquaculture sites may also potentially affect species with SPA's, and on a wider area due to cumulative impacts with other proposed projects in the area.</p>
<p>Does the PP determine the use of small areas at local level</p> <p>OR</p> <p>is it a minor modification of a PP</p>	<p>Y</p> <p>N</p>	<p>The strategy proposes three industry growth scenarios together with a number of new zones which could be used for aquaculture. The size of these zones range from 1.5 km<sup>2</sup> to 7.5 km<sup>2</sup> for a total maximum</p>

SEA Criterion	Yes/No (no other answer except Yes/No)	Explanation
subject to Regulation 4(2)(a) (Regulation 4(3))	N	potential area of around 25km <sup>2</sup> ; 0.7% of Malta's territorial waters.

SEA Criterion	Yes/No (no other answer except Yes/No)	Explanation
Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Regulation 4(4))	Y	The strategy sets the framework for an increased sustainable development of the industry proposes three industry growth scenarios, including the new zones which would be required for such growth.
Is the PP likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Regulation 4(5))		The SEA will be conducted to determine the likely significant effect on the environment.
Is the PP's sole purpose to serve national defence or civil emergency  OR  is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7  OR  Is it a financial or budget PP?	N    N    N	

Part D – Likely Significance of Effects on the Environment

Responsible Authority: MRRA - MAR

Title of PP: Preparation of an Aquaculture Strategy for Malta

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment	Likely to have significant environmental effects? Yes/No (no other answer except Yes/No)	Summary of significant environmental effects (negative and positive)
The degree to which the PP sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources	Y	The strategy proposes three industry growth scenarios together with a number of new zones which could be used for aquaculture per scenario. The size of these zones range from 1.5 km <sup>2</sup> to 7.5 km <sup>2</sup> for a total maximum potential area of around 25km <sup>2</sup> ; only 0.7% of Malta's territorial waters. Production volumes shall respect the carrying capacities for each site and the recommendations include environmental monitoring and sustainable development that encourages good management practice, minimisation of negative interactions with the environment, and compliance with Malta's obligations for its marine waters.
the degree to which the PP influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	Y	The Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development (SPED) will be establishing the strategic framework for the sustainable use of land and sea resources. The Strategy has identified maritime space for aquaculture development. The SPED will have to identify where and how best to accommodate the required marine space for aquaculture within the context of other

		<p>national strategies that also demand maritime space. Therefore the PP will influence the preparation of the SPED.</p> <p>The Flora and Fauna Natural Habitats Protection Regulations (2006) as amended given that there may be an overlap between the proposed aquaculture zones and the north-east Marine Protected Area. However it should be pointed out that these regulations allow any development subject to the carrying out of the necessary Appropriate Assessments (AA).</p> <p>The strategy may also affect the the implementation of the water catchment management plan which has been adopted to enable Malta to achieve the water framework directive's objectives of achieving good ecological status and good chemical status of Maltese waters.</p> <p>The National Environment Policy commits Malta to prepare an Aquaculture Strategy for Malta, 'which will aim at diversification and sustainable growth, taking environmental considerations on board'. The policy indicates that the strategy will set a framework for aquaculture zones according to the loading capacity of the site, so that any negative interactions are kept to a minimum in line with Malta's obligations for its marine waters (Measure 2.3.22)'. The National Environment Policy will not be influenced by the Aquaculture Strategy, but the completion of the Strategy along the lines</p>
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		specified will imply a successful completion of one of the its targets.
the relevance of the PP for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	Y	<p>Environmental considerations have been taken into consideration and measures are included in the draft strategy. These measures are related to the need to improve monitoring systems, along with the need to refine carrying capacity models and the recommendation that aquaculture operations operate with agreed carrying capacity guidelines.</p> <p>The strategy proposes that at an international level, Maltese aquaculture needs to be environmentally sustainable in line with FAO and Common Fisheries Policy initiatives regarding site selection, carrying capacity, good practice and sustainable development.</p>
environmental problems relevant to the PP	Y	<p>The Strategy proposes two environmental issues:  Reducing pressure on wild bluefin tuna stocks as the proposed strengthening of production of closed cycle species (CCS) will shift the trend away from the capture of bluefin tuna for farming purposes, thus creating increases in production that will lead to a sustainable industry.</p> <p>A shift towards an increased production of CCS will open the doors to more diversified products that will feed on artificial EU approved pellets that will decrease the use of trash fish for fish meal due to the use of alternate protein sources.</p> <p>Further, the development is to be according to agreed carrying capacities that are</p>

		calculated according to the aquaculture site. These carrying capacities will seek to minimise any interaction the aquaculture operating unit may have on the seabed.
the relevance of the PP for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. PPs linked to waste management or water protection)	Y	Socio-economic benefits from the industry, including opportunities for fishermen to diversify the revenue streams and an increased employment opportunities, both in the aquaculture industry and in the ancillary servicing sectors including education. The implementation of the strategy may also have a bearing on the implementation of European <i>Acquis</i> related to water quality and waste management.
the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects		The SEA will be conducted to determine the likely significant effect on the environment.
the cumulative nature of the effects		The SEA will be conducted to determine the likely significant effect on the environment.
the trans-boundary nature of the effects	N	Not applicable
the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)	Y	<p>Potential risks to human health from aquaculture activity should be assessed in terms of health effects of (i) consuming farmed fish, (ii) effect of bathing water and (iii) effects resulting from onshore activities including noise, odours, air quality and visual impact.</p> <p>All species suggested for aquaculture shall be native to the Mediterranean Sea so any escapees will not cause environmental damage. Fish diseases are also specific for the species farmed and the preparation of a disease contingency plan is</p>

<p>the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)</p>		<p>recommended.</p> <p>The strategy proposes three industry growth scenarios together with a number of new zones which could be used for aquaculture per scenario. The size of these zones range from 1.5 km<sup>2</sup> to 7.5 km<sup>2</sup> for a total maximum potential area of around 25km<sup>2</sup>; 0.7% of Malta's territorial waters. It is planned that the farms will operate with good management practice within specified carrying capacity limits.</p> <p>The proposed zones were identified following a careful examination of current use of the maritime space and potential impact on the population and coastline in order to minimise any possible impacts.</p>
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Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment	Likely to have significant environmental effects? Yes/No (no other answer except Yes/No)	Summary of significant environmental effects (negative and positive)
the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values (iii) intensive land-use	N	Some of the identified zones lie within the proposed North-East Marine Protected Area. The SEA will also determine whether there are other impacts.
the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status	Y	Some of the identified zones lie within the proposed North-East Marine Protected Area. The SEA will also determine whether there are other impacts.

#### Part E – Summary of Environmental Effects

(Provide a summary of the significant environmental effects of the PP)

Many of the environmental issues that have given aquaculture a negative image, such as the rapid development of a relatively new industry with poorly known environmental effects such as the release of fish oil from feed (trash fish) have already been decreased and will be minimised through the increase in CCS as opposed to the capture-based blue-fin tuna farming. The strategy recommends a monitoring system that lays down clear guidelines on what constitutes an adverse impact that is related to the biomass in the aquaculture operation. In this way a known carrying capacity for the site will be established and clear rules will be established and accepted by the industry.

The SEA will identify the positive and negative impacts that may arise through the implementation of the Aquaculture strategy. It will identify the scenario of development that will best satisfy national and European legislation on environment protection.

Furthermore, any impact or interaction of an aquaculture facility should be carried out by surveys (water quality and benthic) that follow a baseline study that is carried out before the operation starts functioning.

## Part F – Screening Outcome

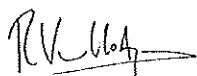
Screening is required under the Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations, 2010 (Legal Notice 497 of 2010). It is our view that:

- An SEA is required because the PP falls under the scope of Regulation 4(3) of the Regulations and is likely to have significant environmental effects
- An SEA is required because the PP falls under the scope of Regulation 4(4) of the Regulations and is likely to have significant environmental effects
- An SEA is not required because the PP is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.

Dr Robert Vassallo Agius

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Name of Officer responsible for the Screening Report



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Signature of Officer responsible for the Screening Report

Malta Aquaculture Research Centre

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Name of Responsible Authority

30<sup>th</sup> May, 2012

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Date

### Notes to Responsible Authorities:

1. The SEA Focal Point cannot provide any feedback to incomplete Screening Templates
2. All responsible authorities should provide the SEA Focal Point with an original signed copy of each Screening Template prepared
3. All responsible authorities should provide the SEA Focal Point with a copy of the public notification which is obligatory under Regulation 4(7) of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations, 2010.

