



### National or European Strategic or Policy Objectives

#### Ireland:

The proposed maritime activity involves the sustainable wild harvesting of *Ascophyllum nodosum* and *Fucus vesiculosus*, two marine algae that regenerate rapidly when harvested using traditional hand-cutting methods, or using the boat-and-rake method, as detailed elsewhere in this MUL application.

The proposal aligns with Project Ireland 2040, which integrates the National Planning Framework and National Development Plan to support sustainable development, balanced regional growth, climate action, and enhanced quality of life through to 2040.

**Project Ireland 2040** focuses on two main goals: Sustainable Growth and Housing and Infrastructure. The proposed maritime usage will contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Growth Objective which is defined as follows:

#### **Sustainable Growth:**

Project Ireland 2040 aims to transition Ireland towards a greener economy. This means investing in renewable energy, cutting carbon emissions, and nurturing innovative industries that align with eco-friendly principles. Additionally, there is a strong emphasis on spreading economic opportunities across the nation, giving rural areas the boost they need to thrive alongside cities.

The objectives of the National Planning Framework (NPF) that are relevant to this application for a MUL are:

- Enable people to live closer to where they work, moving away from the current unsustainable trends of increased commuting.
- Regenerate rural Ireland by promoting environmentally sustainable growth patterns.
- Plan for and implement a better distribution of regional growth, in terms of jobs and prosperity.
- Transform settlements of all sizes through imaginative urban regeneration and bring life / jobs back into cities, towns and villages. (National Planning Framework 2040)

The **National Strategic and Policy Objectives (NPOs)** as outlined in the NPF relevant to this application are:

**National Policy Objective 23:** Facilitate the development of the rural economy through supporting a sustainable and economically efficient agricultural and food sector, together with forestry, fishing and aquaculture, energy and extractive industries, the bio-economy and diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities, while at the same time noting



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the importance of maintaining and protecting the natural landscape and built heritage which are vital to rural tourism.

**National Policy Objective 39:** Support the sustainable growth and development of the maritime economy and continue to invest in the seafood sector and our Fishery Harbour Centres, particularly in remote rural coastal communities and islands

**National Policy Objective 41a:** Ensure that Ireland's coastal resource is managed to sustain its physical character and environmental quality.

**The Northern and Western Region Assembly/Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (NWRA/RSES)** provides a high-level development framework that supports the implementation of the National Planning Framework. The foreshore area covered by this application is part of the North and Western Region.

The NWRA/RSES notes that GDP per capita in the Northern and Western Region has declined to between 75% and 100% of the EU average, resulting in its reclassification as a *Transition Region* for the 2021–2027 funding period. This status provides access to more flexible and enhanced EU Structural Funds to support development as a Smart, Inclusive, Green, and Connected Region. While modest at national level, wild seaweed harvesting can contribute to regional economic development.

**Project Ireland 2040** aims to achieve ten strategic outcomes that will create a more sustainable, inclusive, and prosperous Ireland by 2040. Of those ten strategic outcomes this application for a MUL can contribute to the achievement of at least two outcomes as follows:

- **Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities:** Support the economic and social development of rural areas to ensure they remain vibrant and sustainable.
- **Sustainable Management of Water and Other Environmental Resources:** Ensure sustainable management of water resources and other environmental assets.

### Europe:

The European Strategic & Policy Objectives considered relevant are:

- **European Green Deal & Farm to Fork:** Seaweed is a core pillar of the EU's transition to sustainable food and feed systems. *Ascophyllum nodosum* provides bioactive compounds that can act as prebiotics, promoting gut health in animals.
- **Climate Neutrality 2050:** Wild seaweed forests capture significant carbon; EU waters are estimated to capture up to 23.5 million tonnes of carbon annually. Sustainable harvesting ensures these "blue carbon" sinks remain resilient while providing renewable raw materials.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** Harvesting supports the **EU Algae Initiative**, which aims to build a robust internal algae industry to reduce imports and secure supply chains for bio-based products such as bio-stimulants and pharmaceuticals.



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On November 27 2025, the EU Commission adopted a new **Strategic Framework for a Competitive and Sustainable EU Bioeconomy**, charting a way forward to build a clean, competitive and resilient European economy. By using renewable biological resources from land and sea and providing alternatives to critical raw materials, the EU will move forward towards a more circular and decarbonised economy and can decrease dependence on fossil imports.

Other EU policies and objectives where this MUL application contribute to their achievement include **European Economic and Social Cohesion**:

- **Cohesion Policy (2021–2027)**: Allocates approximately one-third of the EU budget to five objectives: a smarter Europe, a greener Europe, a more connected Europe, a more social Europe, and a Europe closer to its citizens.
- **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) 2023–2027**: Built on ten objectives including ensuring fair income for farmers, climate change action, and vibrant rural areas.
- **The European Green Deal**: A binding commitment to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by **2050**, with an interim target of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030.
- **Open Strategic Autonomy**: An overarching principle to secure Europe’s leading role in critical technologies and reduce reliance on non-EU suppliers for essential resources.

Of the broader European Strategic Objectives (EU 2024-2029) of which there are five, it is considered that the achievement of the following is best served by this application for a MUL:

- **Green & Fair Europe**: Drive climate neutrality, protect biodiversity, promote sustainable agriculture, and ensure social fairness.

### National Targets:

The Irish National Targets are contained in the following Strategic Objectives

- **Climate Action Plan 2025 (CAP25)**: The Seaweed industry aligns with CAP25's goal of achieving a climate-neutral economy by 2050. *Ascophyllum*-derived bio-stimulants mitigate climate impacts in agriculture by increasing crop resilience to extreme weather (drought, salinity) and improving soil health, thereby reducing the need for synthetic chemical inputs.
- **National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF)**: Harvesting contributes to the NMPF's objective of balancing economic growth in coastal communities with environmental protection.
- **Blue Bioeconomy & Circular Economy**: The sector supports the Bioeconomy Action Plan 2023–2025 through initiatives such as AIMBIO (All-Island Marine Bio-based Refineries), announced in October 2025. AIMBIO aims to convert aquatic biomass, including seaweed, into



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high-value bio-based ingredients for agri-food and related applications, promoting sustainability, circularity, and waste reduction through an all-island approach.

### Research Objectives:

The National Strategic Research Objectives considered relevant are:

- **Socio-Economic Development:** The seaweed industry contributes over €90 million annually to the Irish economy, supporting approximately 700 jobs in rural coastal areas. Research focuses on maximizing this "added value" by moving from raw material exports to high-tech domestic processing (e.g., liquid extracts and fine powders).
- **Sustainable Management Research:** A priority research objective is developing "Molecular Priming" and other biotechnologies to enhance agricultural yields under climate stress.
- **Licensing and Traceability:** New regulatory research (2024–2025) aims to improve traceability and compliance within Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), ensuring that harvesting remains in line with the EU Habitats Directive.

### Other:

Sustainability underpins the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the National Planning Framework, which aim to meet present needs without compromising future generations. Since 2015, Ireland's commitment to the SDGs has guided national policy to 2030, with strong alignment to the National Strategic Outcomes, particularly in climate action, clean energy, sustainable communities, economic growth, social equality, and innovation.