

## Recommendation n° 45

### **Proliferation of invasive algae in the Outermost Regions**

Since the last decade, the proliferation of invasive algae in the Outermost Regions (ORs) has been affecting coastal and marine resources, ecosystems and communities.

#### **ORs (Western Atlantic)**

Since 2011, Sargassum (*Sargassum natans* and *Sargassum fluitans*) have been causing concern due to its proliferation and massive accumulation in the Caribbean Sea. These algae reproduce by vegetative fragmentation, which confers them a high proliferation capacity.

#### Consequences on the coastline

- This phenomenon causes environmental, socio-economic and health problems due to the release of noxious gases (hydrogen sulphide and ammonia) resulting from the decomposition of these algae, as well as the logistical problems of collecting tonnes of stranded algae;

- Most fishing ports have a configuration that favors the accumulation of Sargassum, preventing vessels from leaving them;

- In relation to aquaculture, the massive accumulation of Sargassum around marine farms, can cause massive mortality, as was observed in Martinique, due to the decomposition of the algae and the oxygen deficit generated.

#### Offshore consequences

The proliferation of Sargassum:

- Changes the distribution of coastal and pelagic fisheries resources, with a direct impact on catches;

- Prevents the positioning or lifting of fishing gears, causing damage to the vessels engines.

## ORs (Eastern Atlantic - Azores and Canary Islands)

The seaweed *Rugulopteryx Okamurae*, originally from Asia, arrived in the Atlantic Ocean in 2015. Since then, it has spread, reaching the Azores in 2019 and the Canary Islands in 2022. It is a fast-growing, invasive macroalgae that compromise the marine biodiversity. In 2022, it was added to the European Union's (EU) list of invasive alien species<sup>1</sup>, as it has a strong biological, ecological and socio-economic impact, with a particular impact on the fisheries sector.

The biomass of *Rugulopteryx Okamurae* along the coast is a concern to the fisheries industry, as it causes a decrease in catches and negatively impacts the operability of fishing gears.

The Consultative Council for the Outermost Regions (CCRUP) and the Market Advisory Council (MAC) acknowledge the efforts made by the European Commission in relation to this issue, in particular by including a chapter on Sargassum in its report on the Blue Bioeconomy (2022 edition)<sup>2</sup>. Knowing that there is a growing interest in algae and algae-based products market in the EU, both from companies and consumers, and that *most of the solutions for valorization of Sargassum are not yet commercially mature*<sup>2</sup>, more efforts are needed to fully exploit its potential and ensure its long-term economic viability.

Considering the above mentioned, and the responsibility of Member States' in the maritime spatial planning and conservation, and in relation to state aid, the **CCRUP and the MAC recommend to the European Commission and interested Member States:**

- 1- The promotion of recovery and resilience solutions for ecosystems that are already damaged by invasive algae;
- 2- Increasing support for research and stakeholders, in order to find solutions that convert Sargassum and *Rugulopteryx Okamurae* algae into an exploitable resource; in particular, start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises, that have experience in other regions should be encouraged to explore solutions in the ORs;

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<sup>1</sup> [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2022/1203 of 12 July 2022](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Report on the Blue Bioeconomy \(January 2023\)](#)

- 3- Field visits: Legislators from the three European institutions (Council, Parliament and Commission) should visit the ORs affected by the proliferation of invasive algae, in order to better understand its impact on ecosystems, communities and activities.

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of the CCRUP,

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(David Pavón González)

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