

Meeting	EIA Public Consultation in relation to the following proposal: PA/05908/23 - EA00007/18: Proposed conversion from a temporary to a permanent tuna farming area as established in PA 2175/18; to setup the North Aquaculture Zone (NAZ) intended exclusively for tuna farming. Site off Sikka I-Bajda, Sikka I-Bajda, San Pawl il-Bahar.
Date	28 th April 2025
Duration	16.15hrs – 17.15hrs
Location	Microsoft Teams Meeting + Poseidon Hall, AX ODYCY, Qawra, San Pawl il-Bahar.
ERA representatives	Mr. Alexander Camilleri, Ms Christine Tanti, Ms Leonora D’Amato.
Minutes taken by	Ms Marie Therese Vella (ERA), Mr Michael Cassar (ERA).

Mr Alexander Camilleri opened the meeting giving details about the proposed development which is currently subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (PA 5908/23 – EA 00007/18: Proposed conversion from a temporary to a permanent tuna farming area as established in PA 2175/18; to setup the North Aquaculture Zone (NAZ) intended exclusively for tuna farming. Site off Sikka I-Bajda, Sikka I-Bajda, San Pawl il-Bahar.

Details vis-à-vis the purpose of the meeting were provided, in particular that the meeting was part of the EIA process. It was also clarified that this was not the decision-taking meeting but was being held to present the EIA findings and to gather feedback from the public in due time for any relevant considerations to be factored in during the process.

Attendees were informed that proceedings would be minuted and that comments may be put forward in an anonymous manner.

Mr Adrian Mallia, the EIA coordinator delivered a presentation explaining the studies carried out as part of the EIA.

Mr Alexander Camilleri opened the floor for comments after the presentation and reminded the participants that they can also leave a comment in the chat being administered by ERA’s staff.

Mr Charles Azzopardi (Tuna operator)

Mr Azzopardi noted that any accidental droppings of anchors and ropes are collected in September by the divers.



Mr Adrian Mallia (EIA coordinator)

With regards to the accidental droppings visible from the underwater studies carried out by Professor Borg, Mr Mallia stated that he had reviewed up to 2023. He advised Mr Azzopardi that it would be advantageous for them to maintain this practice of collecting accidental dropping.

Perit Censu Galea (Mayor – San Pawl il-Baħar)

Perit Galea emphasised the importance of providing the public with more information about the currents and the actual conditions on the seabed, particularly in relation to the fish farm located 5 kilometres offshore, given that Malta’s primary issue with fish farms is the accumulation of fish slime near the shoreline. He acknowledged that all necessary measures are being implemented by the operators to prevent this occurrence, however an ongoing conflict persists, particularly when slime accumulates near the shoreline. He requested clarification from the coordinator regarding whether this application would designate the area as a permanent site for tuna farming.

Perit Galea commented that during several council meetings, he was requested to clarify the future of this zone, at which point he explained that the application is now under the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture. With authorisation from the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA) and the Planning Authority (PA), the Department of Fisheries will allocate the site to operators for fish farming. The Mayor outlined that previously there was the tendency for abuse, given that the application was in the name of a private operator.

The Mayor enquired about the situation with Qala local council.

Mr Adrian Mallia (EIA coordinator)

Mr Mallia confirmed that from the Ministry’s side, this farm, in the North, will be the only permanent site where tuna will be farmed. The description of the application also changed “to setup the North Aquaculture Zone (NAZ) intended exclusively for tuna farming”.

Mr Mallia confirmed what the Mayor explained and clarified that even if the operator fails to operate or decides to stop operations, the Department of Fisheries can then allocate to another operator.

Mr Mallia confirmed that he had held meetings with the local councils local near the North Aquaculture Zone, namely Qala, St Paul’s Bay, Mellieha and Ghajnsielem. He explained that Qala Local Council is being represented by Professor Alan Deidun and Dr Claire Bonello, and following the slime incident in Hondoq ir-Rummien last August, a meeting with the operators was held. During their discussions, a possible explanation for the incident was provided, which was also endorsed by the Local Council’s consultant. A copy of the report was provided to the respective local councils, who were also notified of today’s hearing. They have all been informed that comments may be submitted until the 5th of May. On a technical level, Mr

Mallia noted that, upon reviewing the monitoring reports, through which the operators are required to report to ERA on the previous year's activities and any complaints, he concluded that there has been consistent improvement over the years. Only one incident was reported in the media last year. He emphasized, however, that there is always room for further improvement.

Dr Charlon Gouder (Federation of Maltese Aquaculture. Producers)

Dr Gouder emphasised the commitment of the operators regarding the implementation of all necessary measures to prevent the accumulation of sea slime near the coastline. He pointed out that there's been some misinformation going around—specifically, foam seen in the sea was being blamed on fish farms, even though those farms were not even operating at the time. Dr Gouder noted also the regular meetings held with ERA regarding the operation on the farms. He commented on the availability of four patrol boats out collecting floating debris that has nothing to do with fish farming. Dr. Gouder said it would be great if other marine industries followed suit. Dr Gouder commented that the disposal of tuna offal is being looked further to improve not only operations in summer but also in winter. He commented that the aspect of slime on birds will also be looked into further. He concluded by stating that tuna farming is a crucial industry when it comes to export.

Mr Alexander Camilleri closed the meeting by confirming that the points raised have been noted. He also thanked the participants and invited them to send any further comments, preferably by email to eia.malta@era.org.mt, or by post to 'The Director', Environment and Resources Authority, Hexagon House, Spencer Hill, Marsa', by the 5th May, 2025.