



Development and demonstration of an automated, modular and environmentally friendly multi-functional platform for open sea farm installations of the Blue Growth Industry

The Blue Growth Farm: first report to Stakeholders

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BGF	The Blue Growth Farm
EC	European Commission
GA	Grant Agreement
MOI	Multipurpose Offshore Installation

1 INTRODUCTION

In this document, we summarise what was learnt at the Blue Growth Farm Stakeholder Workshop in Reggio Calabria in September 2019, and also what was found in the survey of public opinion in the city in the same month. A similar activity has been carried out in the island of Islay (Scotland) and results are here reported as well.

1.1 Background

The Blue Growth Farm (BGF) is a research project funded by the European Union Horizon 2020 Programme. It started on 1st June 2018 and it is expected to end on 1st September 2021. It aims to design floating offshore platforms supporting a wind turbine, a wave energy convertor, and a fish farm (Figure 1).

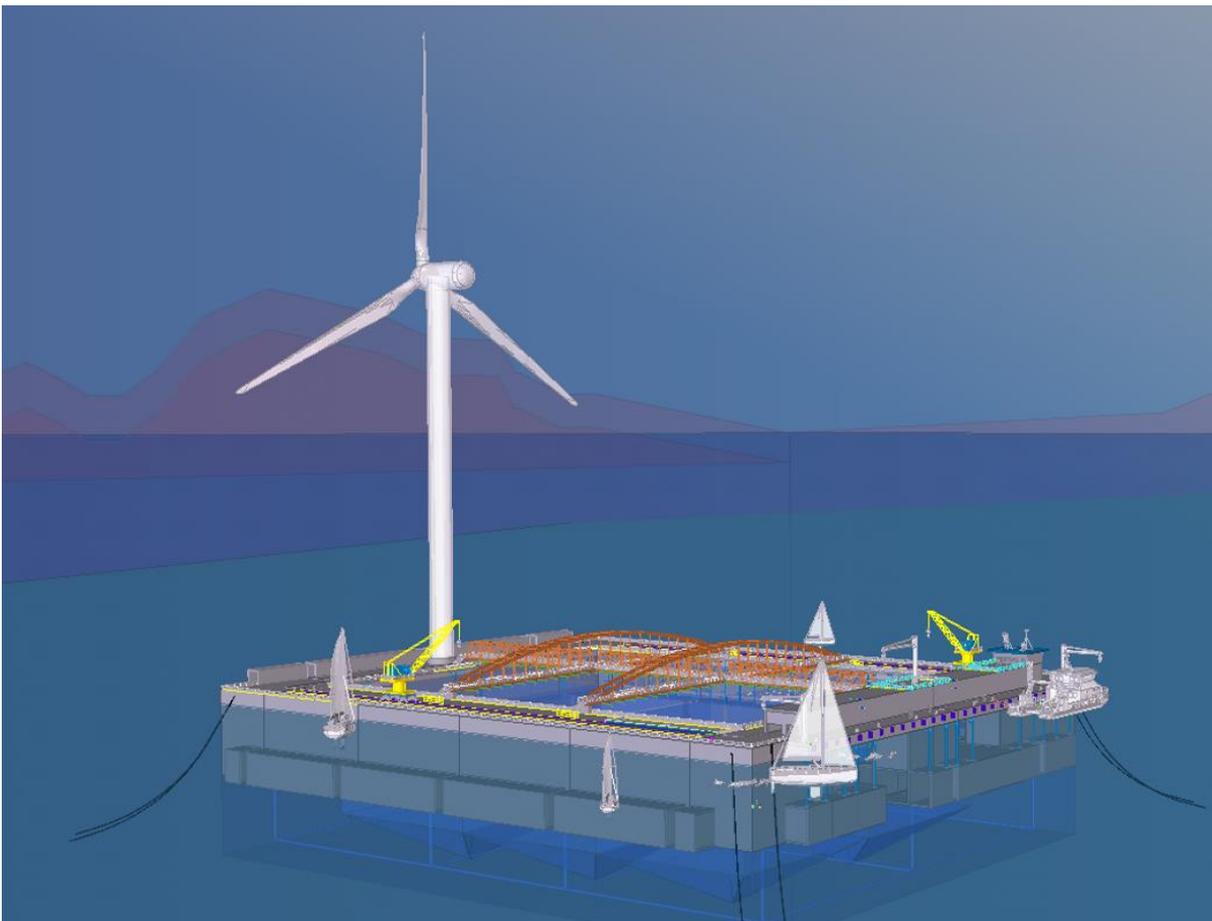


Figure 1. The Blue Growth Farm pictorial view

The project is co-ordinated by RINA Consulting, based in Genoa, and has partners in Cyprus, France, Italy, Scotland and Spain. A key partner is NOEL, the Natural Ocean Engineering Laboratory in Reggio Calabria. With the permission of the Capitaneria of the Port of Reggio Calabria, the BGF project will deploy a 1-15th scale prototype platform at the NOEL site in October 2020.

2 STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

The workshop was held in the offices of the Port Authority of Reggio Calabria on Wednesday September 11, 2019 and was attended by 55 persons. Of these, 28 were stakeholders, persons who might be affected by the deployment of the prototype platform or a full-scale platform, or who represented organisations that might be affected. The others present included representatives of local authorities who opened and closed the proceedings, members of the BGF project, and workshop facilitators.

The aims of the workshop were:

- 1) to introduce the multi-use platform concept to local stakeholders,
- 2) to inform local stakeholders about the deployment of the prototype platform at the NOEL site in Reggio Calabria,
- 3) to discover stakeholder opinions about the concept and the prototype deployment, and
- 4) to recruit stakeholders to a reference group that would meet on several future occasions during the project.

At the workshop, RINA Consulting, supported by NOEL and by WAVE-IT, introduced the concept of multipurpose offshore installations (MOI). Individual views were sought by asking for three positive opinions and 3 negative opinions on post-it notes.



Figure 2. The Blue Growth Farm workshop post-it activity

Facilitated discussions then took place in groups of stakeholders (Figure 3). Finally, lunch was provided in the NOEL building further along the sea front.



Figure 3. The Blue Growth Farm workshop open discussion activity

2.1 Findings from the Workshop

A variety of positive and negative opinions were expressed about MOI:

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- * **Positive opinions:** energy production from a renewable source was seen as the greatest benefit from the development of a platform. Also rated highly were the benefits of boosting local jobs and businesses, increasing local scientific research and prestige, and incentivising younger people to stay and work in Reggio Calabria.
- * **Negative opinions:** the most frequently cited concerns were the visual impact of a platform and turbine and the environmental impact of the waste produced by the farmed fish. There were also concerns about the impact on vessel navigation in the area, the economic sustainability of a deployment, and its final decommissioning. Finally, it was thought to be difficult to “persuade people about the quality of fish produced” from the platform, and high levels of “scepticism” and “disapproval” from local communities and fishermen were anticipated. Explaining the latter, responders thought that many in Reggio Calabria had “scarce information” about renewable energy and aquaculture developments.

3 SURVEYS OF PUBLIC OPINION

On 19th September 2019, NOEL carried out a survey of public opinion in Reggio Calabria by administering a questionnaire to local people and visitors encountered on the sea front (Figure 4).



Figure 4. The Blue Growth Farm public (Reggio Calabria) opinion survey activity

A similar questionnaire was used by SAMS on the Scottish island of Islay during October 2019 (Figure 5).

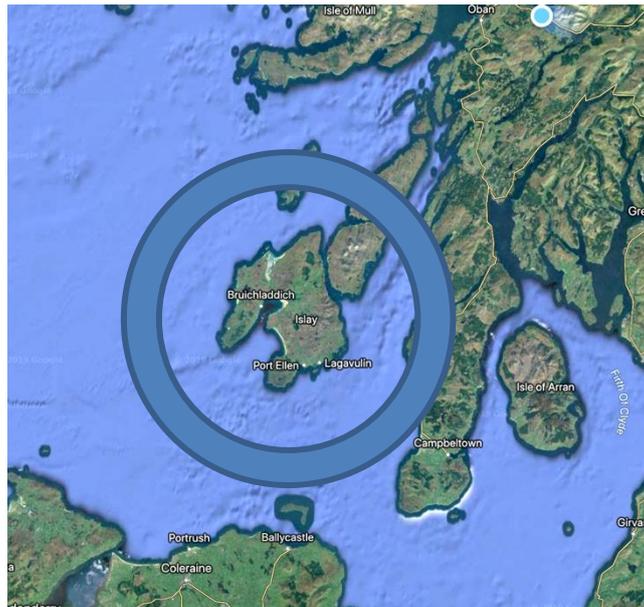


Figure 5. The island of Islay, in western Scotland, where The Blue Growth Farm public opinion survey was repeated

The diagram shown in Figure 6 is an example of pool results of a single question:

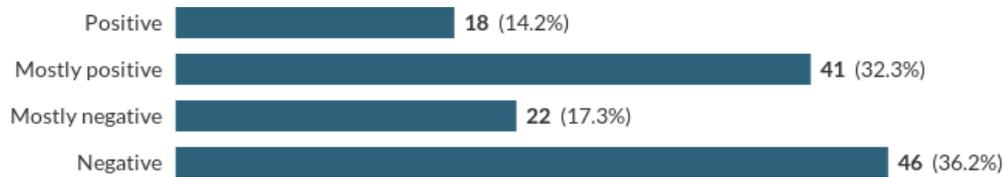


Figure 6. Diagram of survey results: Answers to example question from survey (Islay)

What would your response be, to a proposal to place a fish farm in the Argyll sea area? (6 nautical miles and beyond)?

In this example, the result was assessed as 47% positive (by adding the responses to ‘positive’ and ‘mostly positive’).

Overall survey findings are summarised in Table 1, which shows the percentage of positive responses to the main questions asked. The main conclusions are that:

- the pattern of results was broadly the same in both locations;
- opinion is more favourable towards marine renewable energy generation than to fish farming;
- the regulatory authorities are distrusted.

Table 1. Summary of positive responses to survey questions

N°	Proposed question	Reggio Calabria	Islay
1.1.	What is your opinion of wind turbines that are at sea and used for electricity generation?	75%	88%
1.2	What is your response to a proposal to install wind turbines in the sea near [here]	62%	79%

2.1	What is your opinion of the farming of fish in the sea?	63%	48%
2.2	What would your response be, to a proposal to place a fish farm in the sea near [here]?	57%	47%
3.5	What is your first reaction to [MOI]?	85%	68%
3.6	How likely are you to eat fish produced in one of these installations?	64%	56%
4.1	What would be your response to a hypothetical proposal to place a full-scale MOI in the sea near [here]?	70%	61%
4.3	In your opinion, how likely are you to trust public officials regulate the environmental impacts of this MOI?	37%	38%

4 CONCLUSIONS

The present report has been produced as the result of the survey carried out in Reggio Calabria and in Islay on last year with the specific aim to investigate about public opinion on an initiative of development of a multipurpose offshore installation for fish and electricity production.

The present document is provided to the Stakeholders' Reference Group attending the first BGF workshop in Reggio Calabria as feedback of the mentioned co-working activity.