

Regulatory sandbox for fish health and fish welfare in the Norwegian Food Safety Authority's Southern and Western region

What is the regulatory sandbox?

- A trial scheme run by the Norwegian Food Safety Authority's (NFSA) Southern and Western region.
- A controlled test environment for companies wanting to experiment with new products, technologies and services in the aquaculture industry with follow-up by the Norwegian Food Safety Authority.
- The regulatory sandbox is incorporated in the Norwegian government's White Paper no. 30 (Meld.St.30).

Why have we created a sandbox?

- There are major problems associated with fish health and welfare in today's aquaculture industry. At the same time the industry is seeking to achieve significant growth, and the pace of innovation is high. If the aquaculture industry is to grow, new technology needs to be developed in order to ensure that growth takes place in a way that provides better living conditions for fish.
- The Norwegian Food Safety Authority wants to encourage development of new technology or any methods that is beneficial for the fish.
-

The sandbox has four aims

- The fish shall have better welfare, be healthier and be safe to eat.
- The industry shall gain a better understanding of the regulatory requirements imposed on the aquaculture industry.
- The Norwegian Food Safety Authority shall acquire better expertise about the new technological solutions that apply to the aquaculture industry.
- The Norwegian Food Safety Authority will develop regulations and management practices that will enable us to facilitate the use of both new technology and new production methods that will benefit the fish.

Who can apply to join the sandbox, with what type of projects?

Applicants must be able to answer "yes" to the following 5 questions:

1. The project takes the welfare and biology of the fish into consideration from the very beginning.
2. The project is linked to the Norwegian Food Safety Authority's management sphere and will be undertaken in the Authority's Southern and Western region (the counties of Agder, Rogaland and Vestland).
3. The project will benefit fish health/welfare/the aquaculture industry/food safety and/or contribute to increased sustainability in the industry.
4. The technology/service/product will involve technological innovation or something genuinely new.
5. The project is time-limited and ready to start.

How to apply for participation in the sandbox?

- You must fill out the application form.
- [Please send the application form](#) in editable pdf format to sandkasse@mattilsynet.no.
- The deadline is 01.02.2023.
- The Norwegian Food Safety Authority will consider all completed applications. Applicants will be notified if their project is to be included in the sandbox shortly after the application deadline.
- Brit Hjeltnes and Trygve Poppe are consultants for the NFSA in the process of selecting which projects shall be included in the sandbox.

What happens in the sandbox?

- Companies in the sandbox will have a team from the NFSA who will guide them and work closely with them on the project. The team will help the projects in the sandbox clarify which permits are required by the NFSA, and what is within the regulatory framework and not.
- Applicants must possess all the expertise and resources that are required for undertaking the project (animal welfare/biological/technical, etc.). They are also responsible for ensuring progress in the project.
- All projects in the sandbox shall have a dedicated person who will be responsible for fish welfare throughout the project.

- Applicants must make a project plan for the sandbox. The plan will be published on mattilsynet.no, ensuring that the whole industry can learn from it.

What happens when the sandbox project has been completed?

- Applicants must make a final report for the sandbox. The report shall be approved by the NFSA.
- The final report will be published on mattilsynet.no so that the entire industry can learn from it.
- Any information contained in the applications, project plans and final reports that needs to be exempt from public disclosure will be protected.

The sandbox is not:

- A service for all regions. This is a trial scheme that is currently limited to projects being run in the NFSA's Southern and Western region. ([Link](#))
- A right. It is a way of working, not a decision. It is not possible to appeal against any decisions about who will be included in the sandbox.
- A quality assessment of the projects. We will select the applications we believe are most suitable for the concept. We must have the capacity and expertise to handle the projects in a satisfactory manner.
- Full exemption from legislation and its appurtenant regulations. Some legislation and regulations, such as the Norwegian Animal Welfare Act and the Norwegian Freedom of Information Act, do not qualify for dispensation. International agreements such as the EEA Agreement are also fixed. However, there may be room for manoeuvre in the interpretation of such regulations. In other parts of the regulations we can be more flexible and consider different solutions.
- Consultancy help. Participants in the sandbox must possess all the expertise required for undertaking the project (biological, technical, etc.). Participants are responsible for progress and they must create a project plan. The NFSA can provide guidance about where we normally find critical points and room for manoeuvre in the regulations, etc., but we will not act as consultants.