



The Strategy of Norwegian Blue Forests Network (NBFN)

What are blue forests

Blue forests are coastal ecosystems such as kelp forests, seagrass meadows, salt marshes and mangrove forests.

Blue forests provide numerous ecosystem services. They capture and sequester carbon; produce oxygen; serve as a home and food source for fish and other animal life; improve water quality; protect coastal communities from erosion, storms and flooding; and are of cultural importance to many.

Blue forests are also a source of environmentally friendly food, feed for animals and farmed fish, medicine, and fertiliser.

The world from a blue forest perspective

The ocean is becoming darker, warmer, more acidic, more polluted, and more prone to extreme events such as storms. The changing ocean is not only a concern for coastal states like Norway. The entire planet's well-being depends upon a healthy ocean. This reality is increasingly recognised. As a result, there is growing focus on coastal ecosystems, like blue forests, in both Norway and globally.

Blue forests are a nature-based solution to the climate and environmental crisis

Blue forests are an important nature-based solution to the climate and environmental crisis. They provide a range of essential ecosystem services, including carbon sequestration, biodiversity preservation, habitats and food for fish, and coastal protection. Kelp is one of the most abundant blue forest ecosystems in Norway. Sustainably cultivated and harvested kelp can be used to reduce the climate and environmental footprint of our food, fertiliser and fuel.

A dark future for blue forests?

Blue forests grow along the coastline, where human activity is at its highest. Blue forests across the globe are in decline due to factors such as pollution, overfishing, land use change, heat waves and more frequent storms. Many of Norway's kelp forests and seagrass meadows are also degraded. Further loss of these vital ecosystems will have ripple effects for our climate, our coastal ecosystems, our well-being and our economy.

What Norway does matters – both for Norway and the world

Norway's history, culture and economy are tied to the ocean. The country is the second largest exporter of seafood products. Fish, crabs, lobsters and other animals depend upon healthy blue forests for food, nursery and shelter. Kelp cultivation also has the potential to take off as a new, blue industry in Europe.

Norway has one of the longest coastlines in the world and hosts extensive blue forest habitats. With continued ocean warming and associated stress on tropical blue forests, it is essential that Arctic countries such as Norway protect and preserve their blue forests. This will require addressing the range of human activities that negatively impact blue forests through ecosystem-based management. It also entails protection and restoration of coastal and marine areas.

Norway is in a prime position to be a global leader on blue forests, given its emphasis on the ocean in domestic and foreign policy, development assistance, and research.

Utilising the potential of blue forests requires research, and better dissemination and uptake of this research

While there is a lot we know, there are also large knowledge gaps regarding blue forests in Norway and internationally. For example, we know that blue forests provide numerous ecosystem services, but we are in the early stages of estimating the magnitude and value of these services. Similarly, while promising methods for protecting and restoring blue forests are being tested, more testing and solutions are needed. This research must go hand in hand with dissemination and uptake.

Our vision

Blue forests are thriving and contributing to a healthy planet and people

This will require

Improving the condition of blue forests and securing the ecosystem services they provide, including carbon removal, biodiversity protection and fish stock maintenance

Our mission

Be the best source of reliable and up to date knowledge on Norwegian blue forests in order to raise awareness, offer solutions, inspire ecosystem-based policymaking and encourage the sustainable use of blue forests in Norway and beyond

To achieve this, we will

- **Gather:** Synthesise latest research on blue forests
- **Share:** Share blue forests knowledge and expertise
- **Convene:** Bring the spectrum of actors interested in blue forests together

Our scope

- All blue forests, especially blue forests in Norway (macroalgae/kelp, seagrass and saltmarshes) and blue forests supported by Norwegian development assistance
- All blue forest ecosystem services, including carbon removal, biodiversity and fisheries
- Both natural and commercially grown forests

