

Boom in production of organic line mussels in Denmark

Organic farming of line mussels makes a significant foot print in the development of the Danish Aquaculture sector targeting 10 % of the production being organic by 2018. Currently 9 production units have been approved for a total production of some 3,500 tons/year. In particular the Danish production of line mussels is taken place in the "Limfjorden" (North West Jutland), where the main producer currently is Seafood Limfjord in cooperation with the mussel processing company Vildsund Blue in Nykøbing Mors. The line mussels are farmed on lines and in big socks, and due to the fact that they are reared higher in the water column than wild mussels more feed is available for their growth. The natural occurring mussel fry is settling on the lines each year, and harvesting is taken place from a boat. Further the mussels contribute to the removal of nitrogen and phosphorus from the water.

In addition to fulfilling the requests to conventional production of line mussels the organic line mussels must fulfil several further requests related to environment, resource consumption, food security and animal welfare. The organic production of line mussels must be approved by governmental authorities issuing an organic report, which includes "organic self-regulation program" and "plan for sustainable management", which includes impacts of the production on the environment, removal of nutrients (N and P) per year, applied energy sources (if possible renewable energy).

Furthermore, organic production of line mussels is characterized by:

- Respecting the distance between the production unit and possible sources of pollution
- Prohibition to apply hormones and GMO in the production
- Consideration to protected species, e.g. birds, porpoise, otter
- Focus on prevention of diseases
- Extended log-book to secure traceability in the production
- Prohibition of anti-fouling on boat and production units
- Priority of using easy degradable materials
- No use of antibiotics or chemicals in the production
- Only use of approved organic substances in connection to the processing on land

The positive development in the production of organic line mussels has been facilitated by various initiatives from the Danish aquaculture sector. This includes contribution to establishment and development of a sustainable market for organic line mussels in cooperation with the organic line mussel producers and the processing industry and supported by governmental funds. Further knowledge about organic line mussels has been extended to the whole value – and distribution chain at national and international level.

The breakthrough of the production of organic line mussels in Denmark paves the way for perspectives in the whole sector.

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Photo (top 1-3) by Alex Mikkelsen
Photo (bottom) by Villy J. Larsen