

# Blue Economy Deep Dive

Facilitating sustainability and financial readiness of target sectors

Across the blue economy, many nature-positive business models are technically promising but remain **difficult to finance at scale**. The constraint is rarely whether capital exists - it is whether **enabling conditions are in place** for capital to flow at reasonable risk. The **Blue Economy Deep Dive** is a modular service designed as an **experience + dialogue series** that contextualises a chosen blue economy sector in a specific geography. This unique 2-part approach brings together **local stakeholders** from the private and public sectors and a curated set of both **local and international experts** (finance, banking, market access, supply chains, production, impact investing) to jointly diagnose constraints, map enabling conditions, provide capacity building, and define practical pathways for finance to support nature-positive outcomes. First, through a **guided field excursion**, participants are led on a thorough examination of the sector from a transdisciplinary perspective. Rather than focusing simply on the usual economic players, the deep dive explores cross-cutting services, including ecosystem restoration, climate resilience, and livelihoods support. Building on these lessons, a **directed working session** facilitates informed discussions that help identify barriers and opportunities for impact investment while leveraging partnerships for sustainable development. Participants and sponsors gain a deep appreciation of the broader system.

## What it is

**SustainaSea's Blue Economy Deep Dive** provides a structured way for funders, investors, and implementation partners to move beyond assumptions and understand the **real enabling conditions** that determine whether financial interventions will succeed. By combining an expert-led field mission with facilitated stakeholder meetings and a practical synthesis package, the Deep Dive helps decision makers identify:

- 1) what is currently enabling investment
- 2) what requires system support to drive further investment
- 3) how to sequence finance, technical assistance (TA), and coordination to enable nature-positive outcomes in the sustainable blue economy

## What it does

- **Builds shared understanding** of how the target sector works in practice (economics, incentives, governance, and operational realities)
- **Maps constraints and bottlenecks** across the value chain and the financial ecosystem (where risk accumulates, where margins disappear, where incentives misalign)
- **Identifies enabling conditions** that must be strengthened for finance to deliver intended outcomes (policy, enforcement, infrastructure, capacity, data, and market access)
- **Clarifies what finance can and cannot do** without parallel support (e.g., TA facilities, guarantees, insurance, blended structures, regulatory support)
- **Generates a prioritised action plan** for stakeholders and lenders - focused on feasible steps
- **Informs a pipeline of investable opportunities** (projects, SMEs, intermediaries) and the support required to make them bankable
- **Mobilises partners** through effective communication
- **Strengthens stakeholder coordination**, including exploring whether a coordinating entity / platform is needed to drive implementation

Location Hybrid	Sector focus Small scale fisheries, aquaculture, processing, shipping, tourism, waste management	Indicative length Field mission 3 - 5 days Workshop 2 - 3 days
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## Background & market gap

To help close the conservation finance gap, a great deal of attention has been focused on developing a sustainable blue economy. Within this movement, project developers, investors, funders, and NGOs often complain of limited investable and transaction pipelines. Simultaneously, many nature-positive business models (e.g., sustainable fisheries, restorative aquaculture, blue carbon, renewable energy integration, and emissions reduction) are technically promising but remain difficult to finance at scale. In practice, many project sourcing and due diligence missions conclude that stakeholders must first step back and align on system constraints before interventions can work as intended. Common bottlenecks include: fragmented value chains, unclear routes to market, gaps in governance and enforcement, insufficient data and monitoring, weak investment readiness among SMEs, and local financial institutions that lack sector understanding, tools, or mandates to lend into ocean-related activities.

The common constraint is rarely a question of whether capital exists or not - it is *whether enabling conditions are in place for capital to flow effectively and at reasonable risk* within established sectors.

SustainaSea's **Blue Economy Deep Dive** product responds to this gap by combining (i) an **in-depth field mission** hosting cross-disciplinary local and international experts and (ii) a **structured stakeholder dialogue** to understand how the system functions in reality and why financing does or does not reach viable actors.

## Why it works

The Deep Dive is built around five principles

<b>1. Field-first learning</b>	Experts and local institutions experience operations, constraints, incentives, and risks on the ground - not only in slide decks
<b>2. Big picture systems diagnosis</b>	The field excursion and dialogue focus on commonly underdeveloped enabling conditions (policy, institutions, market structure, data, risk, capacity) rather than isolated projects
<b>3. Local stakeholder engagement</b>	Facilitating connections between entities already positioned to resolve bottlenecks while providing capacity building leverages impact
<b>4. Targeted storytelling</b>	A documented human-focused story facilitates communication with diverse audiences and through various channels, providing a baseline snapshot of challenges and opportunities
<b>5. Actionable outcomes for lenders</b>	Structured outputs inform financing design, TA, and partner selection for funders and investors

## Who needs it

The Deep Dive is designed to align with and support strategies commonly held by organisations exploring reliable, field-tested insights and pathways to drive investment. It also enables and showcases cross-cutting priorities typically embedded in blue economy programming, such as climate mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity protection and restoration, inclusive livelihoods, and responsible value chains.

Target sponsors include:

- **Large NGOs, development institutions and platforms** promoting ecosystem restoration and facilitating investment in the blue economy
- **Multilateral development banks and development finance institutions** building investable pipelines, TA priorities, and de-risking structures for blue SMEs and projects
- **Impact investors and funds** seeking credible context, risk understanding, and validated partners
- **Philanthropic donors** supporting enabling conditions and pipeline development

## About the coordinator - SustainaSea

SustainaSea Blue Economy Advisors, transdisciplinary specialists in multiple sectors leads and organises the Deep Dive. Our team boasts experience in seafood value chains (from reef to plate), academic research (from sea cucumbers to whales) and travel logistics (from boats to bikes). Engaging with diverse actors is our speciality and we work in close partnership with on-site host organisations. We remain an independent actor in the landscape, allowing us to better bridge the gap between prospective lenders and implementation parties.

Participants	
The field mission and dialogue are primarily aimed at establishing connections between local partners, facilitated by independent experts.	
Group	Representatives
<b>Local stakeholders</b>  A selected group of active participants representing the sector's full system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SMEs and value chain actors (producers, processors, aggregators, logistics providers, service companies)</li> <li>• Community representatives and local associations</li> <li>• Relevant ministries, regulators, and enforcement bodies</li> <li>• Local financial institutions (banks, MFIs, insurers)</li> <li>• Selected off-takers and market actors (domestic / export)</li> <li>• NGOs, research bodies, and technical agencies engaged in the sector</li> </ul>
<b>External experts &amp; invitees</b>  Curated specialists based on sector focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Banking / SME finance / credit risk</li> <li>• Blended finance / guarantees / TA facility design</li> <li>• Impact investing / fund management</li> <li>• Insurance (including parametric)</li> <li>• Value chain, markets, and route-to-market strategy</li> <li>• Production systems (fisheries, aquaculture, energy, blue carbon)</li> <li>• Data systems, traceability, ESG, and reporting</li> <li>• Communications and storytelling (market positioning, stakeholder alignment)</li> </ul>

How it works: format & phases	
The Deep Dive is designed as a blended process combining field immersion and structured working sessions.	
Phase	Key activities
<b>1 - Scoping &amp; design (remote)</b>	<i>Alignment between sponsor expectations, local realities, and potential partners</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define sector focus, geography, and key questions</li> <li>• Stakeholder mapping and interview plan</li> <li>• Review of existing reports/data; identification of key evidence gaps</li> <li>• Pre-mission webinar and training</li> </ul>
<b>2 – Expert field mission (in country)</b>	<i>A guided set of site visits and interviews to understand real constraints and validate assumptions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operational visits (production sites, landing sites, farms, facilities, energy installations)</li> <li>• Value chain nodes (cold chain/logistics, aggregation, traceability)</li> <li>• Market exploration (buyers, exporters, retail, hospitality)</li> <li>• Finance ecosystem discussions (banks, insurers, regulators, intermediaries)</li> <li>• Community and workforce perspectives (livelihoods, regulatory setup, labour realities)</li> <li>• Video material collected and prepared as storytelling introduction to Phase 3</li> </ul>
<b>3 – Stakeholder dialogue (in country)</b>	<i>A facilitated dialogue event / workshop to dive further: sessions can be adapted to fit the sector and integrated with capacity building</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synthesise findings and align stakeholders</li> <li>• Develop enabling conditions roadmap</li> <li>• Reinforce connections between local actors</li> <li>• Focus on side events (meals, receptions, breakout groups) rather than panels and lectures</li> </ul>
<b>4 – Synthesis &amp; story (post mission)</b>	<i>A concise package translating insights into</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where finance fits and what non-financial conditions must be addressed</li> <li>• Investment relevant storytelling outputs</li> <li>• Photos and video, social media content</li> <li>• Lender briefs</li> <li>• Identified synergies and partnerships</li> <li>• Clear, actionable next steps</li> </ul>

Outputs	
Core deliverables (tailored to sponsor needs) typically include:	
<b>1. Field mission lessons learned</b>	Presented at the main event to set the stage for dialogue
<b>2. Deep Dive briefing note</b>	Sector snapshot, stakeholder map, and summary of how the system really works
<b>3. Enabling conditions roadmap</b>	Identified constraints, recommended interventions, executing partners
<b>4. Finance fit assessment</b>	Where financing can work now vs. what requires pre-conditions / TA / de-risking
<b>5. Pipeline &amp; partner map</b>	Investable leads and intermediaries, including readiness gaps and support needs
<b>6. Convening structure</b>	Strengthened stakeholder alignment and a clearer coordination mechanism
<b>7. Action plan</b>	Practical next steps outlining partners, sequencing, and timelines

What are the takeaways	
<b>Media</b>	SustainaSea coordinates documentation (photos & video) to deliver quality shared assets for sponsors and participants. Field mission video is delivered on site with additional curated media available afterwards.
<b>Capacity building</b>	Several points of contact allow potential capacity building activities to support local actors on their sustainability journey.
<b>Partnerships</b>	Leveraging support and cooperation by local actors is a key outcome. Leading entities and coordination bodies are identified.
<b>In-kind contributions</b>	Local stakeholders are positioned to variably contribute to the activities through provision of services, venues, personnel, thereby reducing overall costs.
<b>Effective networking</b>	Focusing on social aspects of dialogue events and workshops provides a foundation to learn more about the people behind partners in the real economy.
<b>Proposed focused workshop sessions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System mapping: how the sector functions (flows, incentives, governance, economics)</li> <li>• Enabling conditions and bottleneck analysis (policy, enforcement, infrastructure, capacity)</li> <li>• Impact and assessment: credible metrics, reporting pathways, and verification constraints</li> <li>• Investment readiness: what makes actors and projects bankable in this context</li> <li>• Financial ecosystem: risk perceptions, constraints, suitable instruments</li> <li>• De-risking and resilience tools (guarantees, insurance, technical assistance)</li> <li>• Decarbonisation and renewable integration opportunities</li> <li>• Action planning: priorities, sequencing, and responsibilities</li> <li>• Value chain improvements and route-to-market strategy</li> </ul>

What is the commitment
<p>Budgets depend on geography, mission length, number of experts, and production requirements. Typical cost categories include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordination and project management</li> <li>• Travel and accommodation (local and external experts)</li> <li>• Local transportation and field logistics</li> <li>• Event venue and catering</li> <li>• Documentation and media</li> <li>• Synthesis and reporting outputs</li> <li>• Facilitation support (as needed)</li> </ul> <p>Deep Dive duration is up to 7 days on-site, combining all field elements. This is recommended in order to fully explore the situation and unlock the system.</p>

SustainaSea’s Blue Economy Deep Dive reveals what must change before investment can work