

# Aquaculture Advisory Council

## Executive Committee meeting

16th July (09:00-13:00)

Online meeting

### Minutes

**Attendants:** **Javier Ojeda** (Chair), **Marc-Philip Buckhout** (Vice-Chair), **Paul Denekamp** (Stichting Vissenbescherming), **Bruno Guillaumie** (EMPA), **Luisa Alvarez** (FEDEPESCA), **Szilvia Mihalffy** (FEAP), **Douglas Waley** (Eurogroup for Animals), **Pier Antonio Salvador** (COPA), **Bernhard Feneis** (Cogeca), **Erik Bjorn Olsen** (Danish Society for a living sea), **Anne-Laure Prego-Cauchet** (CNC), **Giuseppe Prioli** (AMA), **Phil Brooke** (CIWF), **Yannis Pelekanakis** (Federation of Greek Maricultures), **Catherine Pons** (FEAP), **Pedro Reis Santos** (Observer), **Carmen Antonie** (Observer), **Katrina Lang** (Observer), **Cécile Fouquet** (AAC Secretariat), **Charlotte Musquar** (AAC Secretariat), **Pascale Colson** (DG MARE)

**Excused:** **Addy Risseeuw** (Vice-chair and Treasurer)

**Abbreviations:** **FG** (Focus Group), **WG** (Working Groups), **EC** (European Commission), **MS** (Member States), **WP** (Work Programme)

### Agenda

#### 1. Adoption of the agenda and approval of the last ExCom minutes (February 06, 2019)

-Adoption of the agenda

Point 11 on the decision on the modification of the per diem was moved before Point 9. C. on the agenda (Draft 2020-2021 budget). Under AOB (Point 15 in the agenda), a point on the overview of the comments received during the first AAC meeting evaluation questionnaire was added.

The agenda was adopted with these changes.

-Approval of the minutes

**Luisa Alvarez (Fedepesca)** suggested additions on page 3 of the last ExCom meeting minutes as follows: "Pier Antonio Salvador (COPA) suggested that observers cover their own expenses. The Vice-Chair Marc-Philip Buckhout **and Luisa Alvarez (Fedepesca)** agreed." and on page 7 as follows: "Several organisations, including Fedepesca, believe that it should be mandatory to inform about the origin for canned and processed products when they contain one single fish product that supposes more than **50% of the total amount.**"

The minutes were adopted with these changes.



## 2. Working Groups: Updates

by the WG Chairs

**Andrea Fabris (WG1 Chair)** listed the main issues currently discussed in WG1: animal health (Animal Health Law, Antimicrobial Resistance, exotoxins), nutrition and food safety (a recommendation on zoonotic parasites is about to be concluded). As for the topic of fish welfare, the focus group will be meeting for a full day on October 6 to discuss the state of play on this topic and agree on the work to be realised within the AAC.

**The Secretariat** informed the ExCom that the unused 12.000€ budget of WG1 will be used to organize the Animal Welfare FG.

**Paul Denekamp (WG2 Vice-Chair)** recalled that WG2 has approved two recommendations: one on shellfish specific guidelines and "Norovirus 2". The FG on the ecosystem services is also preparing a recommendation.

The WG2 focus group on the ecosystem services also include the members of the former WG1 focus group on Wetlands. Both groups decided to merge as their work could be coincident. **Javier Ojeda (Chair)** suggested that the Secretariat sends an email to remind all WG members of the opportunity to join this FG.

**The secretariat** added that WG2 should be using all of its budget. The rapporteur is now working on his third recommendation on the implementation of the Water Framework Directive.

**Paul Denekamp (WG3 Vice-Chair)** recalled the ongoing FGs: Farm to Fork Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy, Consumer Information, Climate, Food Security. An external consultant will be hired to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on the sector. Discussions are now ongoing on documents shared with the FG members on marine litter, the Biodiversity strategy, consumer information, food security and the Farm to Fork strategy.

**Javier Ojeda (Chair)** recalled that a 3<sup>rd</sup> Recommendation on the EC strategic guidelines for a sustainable aquaculture was approved in January and that the public consultation announced by the EC is now accessible online.

## 3. Update on the activity of the Task Force on the definition of the AAC's stakeholder categories

**Javier Ojeda (Chair)** presented the work of the Task Force, explaining that there is a certain agreement on some aspects of the definitions of 'sector organisations' and 'other interest groups' but not yet on where to position the 'suppliers', 'professionals' associations', 'civil society' and 'organisations representing finance institutions'.

**Pascale Colson (DG MARE)** commented that the given definitions seem to stick to the delegated act's definitions. In her view, suppliers are representatives of the sector. As for professional associations and civil society, they would belong to the 'other interest group'.

**Douglas Waley (Eurogroup for Animals)** was not clear on the rationale for separating professional associations from the financial interests representatives. For **Luisa Alvarez (Fedepesca)**, suppliers should be part of the sector and professionals' associations and civil society belong to the Other Interest group. For **Phil Brooke (CIWF)** the question that should determine if an association belongs to one group or the other is whether they have a financial interest in aquaculture.

All these comments will be considered by the Task Force and a proposal will be prepared in view of the September General Assembly.

#### 4. AAC Work Programme

As part of the process to request for the yearly EC grant, the ExCom has to approve a Work Programme that will then be adopted by the General Assembly. **The Secretariat** presented the draft Work Programme for 2020-2021 prepared with the Working Group Chairs, as well as the comments previously received from ExCom members. All comments were discussed and the Working Programme reviewed in consequence.

**With these modifications, the Working Programme was approved by the ExCom and will be submitted to the General Assembly.**

#### 5. 2020-2021 Work calendar

- Decision on 2021 AAC meetings dates

**The ExCom chose the following dates for the 2021 AAC meetings:**

- February 2, 3 and 4: WG and ExCom meetings
- June 1 and 2: WG meetings
- July 20: ExCom meeting
- September 21: General Assembly
- October 26, 27 and 28: WG and ExCom meetings

#### 6. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

**Javier Ojeda (Chair)** proposed to have the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-Chair to act as DPO for the AAC.

**This suggestion was approved and will be submitted to the General Assembly.**

**Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA)** suggested that some budget is dedicated to DPO training. The Secretariat will get more information about possible trainings.

## 7. AAC budget by the secretariat

- Update on the EC Financial Seminar

**The Secretariat** presented a summary of the information provided by the EC during the June 12 Financial Seminar with DG MARE. She explained that the new distribution of funds amongst the ACs should not affect the AAC's ability to keep requesting up to 300.000 EUR EC funds each year. She also presented the new EC guidelines, explaining that they introduce a lot more flexibility in how to request and use the EU grant money.

- Update on the 2019-2020 budget

**The Secretariat** gave an update about the budget:

- The AAC has received more money than the previous year from the Member States: Finland and Portugal were new contributors in 2019-2020. A 6000 € contribution is still expected from Slovenia for this financial year.
- Provisions about available funds for the rest of the year are made difficult by the current COVID-19 situation. Without having to organise in-person meetings and to refund members for their travel expenses, there may be a big amount of money unused by the end of the year.

**Addy Risseeuw (Treasurer)** – excused – has been consulted and agreed on the budget before it was presented to the ExCom.

## 8. Revision of the AAC reimbursement rules

After having studied the reimbursement rules in other ACs, the Chair appreciated that the AAC's per diem is one of the lowest ones. Although the ExCom agreed in one of its passed meetings not to raise the reimbursement ceiling for plane tickets, **the Chair** proposed to increase the per diem as a way to compensate some members' expenses when they travel to AAC meetings. The Chair also proposed to raise the car mileage up to the maximum allowed by the EC.

	<b>Proposed revision</b>	<b>AAC Current rules</b>
<b>Per diem</b>	92 € (62€ if lunch provided, or adapted to the real cost)	50 € (35 € if lunch provided)
<b>Car mileage</b>	0.22 € / km	0.18 € / km

**The ExCom approved this proposal, which will be presented to the**

## General Assembly.

**Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA)** asked if there could be some compensation for the additional costs induced by virtual meetings.

**Pascale Colson (DG MARE)** indicated that neither the EC nor any other AC foresees such compensations. Such an expense could only exist if the budgetary situation allows it and if it is not be considered as "exaggerated". She also suggested that the AAC Reimbursement Rules should be made available on the public part of the AAC website.

**The Secretariat** will inquire on the suggestion by Bruno Guillaumie and upload the reimbursement rules on the AAC website.

### 5. 2020-2021 Work calendar

- Decision on 2020 meetings as virtual or physical

In view of the the COVID-19 pandemic situation, **Marc-Philip Buckhout (Vice-Chair)**, **Douglas Waley (Eurogroup for Animals)**, **Bernhard Feneis (Cogeca)**, **Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA)**, **Phil Brooke (CIWF)**, **Andrea Fabris (WG1 Chair)** and **Pier Antonio Salvador (COPA)** agreed that it would be best to organise all remaining 2020 meetings online.

As for the Fish Welfare FG, **Andrea Fabris (WG1 Chair)** indicated that it should also be held online and that WG1 will organise a second in-person meeting in 2021.

**The decision to hold all remaining AAC meetings for 2020 virtually was approved by the ExCom.** In view of this decision, **the Secretariat** requested the opportunity for additional training, mentioning that it has already been very useful for the good conduct of the WG virtual meetings. The ExCom agreed and **Douglas Waley (Eurogroup for Animals)** suggested that a specific emphasis was put on improving discussion among participants.

**The Secretariat** noted that budget will be made available to allow interpretation for the online FG meetings.

### 7. AAC budget by the secretariat

- Presentation of the draft 2020-2021 budget for approval

**The budget was approved by the ExCom.**

### 9. Renewal of the Secretariat services contract

**The Chair presented the results of the call for proposals and the results of the selection process. The proposal of AliénorEU ranked higher then the one received from Avis Partners. AliénorEU will be recommended**

by the ExCom to the General Assembly to continue providing the AAC's secretariat services for the next 3 years.

## 10. Identifying a new AAC Vice-Chair

**Marc-Philip Buckhout (Vice-Chair)** announced the decision from his organisation, Seas at Risk, to withdraw from the AAC. One reason for this decision is the limited funding dedicated internally to aquaculture, limiting the time he is able to use on the AAC. Another reason is the structural problem of the minority position of the Other Interest group within the Advisory Councils in general. He stated that this situation does not allow the OIG to block a decision with which they don't agree. He felt that he has not been able to discuss environmental sustainability as much as he wanted to, even though there is an interest from stakeholders in this topic. Shall the structure of the AAC and its groups change in the future, Seas at Risk would be happy to rejoin. The decision will be effective as of October 31, 2020.

**Javier Ojeda (Chair)** thanked Marc-Philip for all the work done during the past 4 years and informed the ExCom that **the nomination of the next Vice-Chair will take place during the September General Assembly**. It will need to be a member of the ExCom and someone from the Other Interest group.

**Bernhard Feneis (Cogeca)** and **Pier Antonio Salvador (COPA)** also thanked him for his work. **Pier Antonio Salvador (COPA)** pointed out that, nevertheless, it is important to distinguish the AAC objectives from the individual objectives of its members.

## 11. Strategic Guidelines

**The Secretariat** presented the main outcomes of the 29-30 of June Technical Seminar with DG MARE and the Member States experts on the Strategic Guidelines, to which the AAC Chair and Vice-Chairs were invited. **Pascale Colson (DG MARE)** mentioned that the work of the AAC on this file was greatly appreciated.

## 12. Brexit

**Pascale Colson (DG MARE)** indicated that:

- (1) According to Annex 3 of the CFP, it was possible to invite British members as active observers.

*"When issues that affect them are discussed, representatives of the fisheries sector and other interest groups from third countries, including representatives from RFMOs, that have a fishing interest in*

*the area or fisheries covered by an Advisory Council, may be invited to participate as active observers."*

- (2) They can receive reimbursement according to Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/242.

*"When inviting observers from third countries as referred to in point (k) of paragraph 2 of Annex III of Regulation (EC) No 1380/2013, Advisory Councils may contribute to the travel and accommodation expenses of those observers under the same conditions that they apply for their members."*

**Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA)** wondered if they should be systematically invited to the AAC meetings or only for relevant topics. However, if they are invited, they should be reimbursed. **Luisa Alvarez (Fedepesca)** and **Bernhard Feneis (Cogeca)** agreed with him.

**Javier Ojeda (Chair)** mentioned that invitations are linked to reimbursements. He expressed the difference between inviting and reimbursing any organisation for a specific meeting and offering an invitation and reimbursement on a permanent basis when none of these organisations will be paying any membership fees. He suggested to invite the AAC British members to continue attending AAC WG and FG meetings during 2021 and to discuss this issue again by the end of 2021. **The ExCom agreed with this proposal, which will be submitted to the General Assembly.**

### **13. AOB**

**The Secretariat** presented the results of the first evaluation questionnaire, which was sent to the AAC members after the June virtual WG meetings.

### **14. Date and place of the forthcoming meeting**

**The next ExCom meeting will take place virtually on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 2020.**