

# Aquaculture Advisory Council

## Executive Committee meeting

20<sup>th</sup> July 2021 (10:00-13:00)

Online meeting

## Minutes

**Attendants:** **Javier Ojeda** (Chair), **Paul Denekamp** (Vice-Chair), Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA), Szilvia Mihalffy (FEAP), **Ole Christensen** (FEFAC), **Luisa Alvarez** (FEDEPESCA), **Douglas Waley** (Eurogroup for Animals), **Pier Antonio Salvador** (COPA), **Giuseppe Prioli** (AMA), **Anne-Laure Prego-Cauchet** (CNC), **Phil Brooke** (CIWF), **Yannis Pelekanakis** (Federation of Greek Maricultures), **Addy Risseeuw** (PO Mosselcultuur), **Andrea Fabris** (WG1 Chair), **Stéphane Angeri** (WG2 Chair), **Cécile Fouquet** (AAC Secretariat), **Charlotte Musquar** (AAC Secretariat)

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

### 1. Opening by the Chair

**Javier Ojeda (Chair)** opened the meeting and welcomed the participants.

### 2. Adoption of the agenda and approval of the last ExCom minutes (February 4, 2021)

#### - Adoption of the agenda

There was a proposal to include new information about gender participation in the AAC meetings' minutes by **Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA)**. **Javier Ojeda (Chair)** welcomed the idea behind the proposal but proposed not include it in the Minutes. Nevertheless he suggested keeping a record on this participation for statistical purposes and corrections if needed.

The agenda was adopted with no changes.

#### - Approval of the minutes

The minutes were adopted with a comment received from DG MARE before the meeting.

### 3. Working Groups: Updates by the WG Chairs

#### - Working Group 1



**Andrea Fabris (WG1 Chair)** listed the main ongoing issues in WG1:

- A Recommendation on CITES was finalized by WG1 and should now be approved by the ExCom;
  - Another Recommendation on differential food safety is in the process of being finalized at the WG level;
  - There will be two Recommendations drafted by the end of the year on fish welfare: one on fish transport and one requesting the creation of fish welfare reference centres in the EU;
  - Several EU regulations have recently entered into force (Animal Health Law, Control regulation) and WG1 will keep an eye on their proper implementation;
  - Research: there has been a discussion in WG1 to look out for new research projects that could be of interest to the AAC;
  - Work on the Ecosystem Services Recommendation as been carried out together with WG2;
  - The WG1 members have also contributed to the work on the wildlife's impact on aquaculture;
  - The MAC has participated to the last WG1 meeting to update the members about the matter of the labelling of caviar.
- Working Group 2

**Stéphane Angeri (WG2 Chair)** listed the 4 main topics currently being discussed within WG2:

- Zoning of shellfish protected waters – an IT problem is currently keeping the Rapporteur from moving forward but a solution was found and the work should resume quickly;
  - Loss of biodiversity and emerging pathogens – Audrey Lainé (CNC) is preparing a working document that will be presented at the beginning of October, when the FG will meet. In the meantime, it is necessary to share as much documentation as possible with the Secretariat;
  - Predation of protected birds: Elena Venturini from DG AGRI did a presentation on wolves and the compensation scheme for sheep farmers. The WG2 FG on wildlife will meet on September 7 to provide solutions to this problem;
  - Norovirus prediction: the idea is to have a preventive and concerted alert system. A model is being developed at CRC Bretagne Sud. This should allow for the development of a methodological framework.
- Working Group 3

**Paul Denekamp (as WG3 Vice-Chair)** listed the different topics discussed in WG3:

- Follow up on the EU Strategic guidelines for a sustainable aquaculture (Strategic guidelines) and the EMFAF by DG MARE;
- COVID-19: a questionnaire has been circulated by the expert hired by the AAC;
- Marine litter: an expert has also been hired to draft a report;
- Climate change: a ToR should be approved by the ExCom by the end of August;

- Organic aquaculture: a draft is being examined by the FG;
- Level-playing field: a draft is also being discussed at FG level;
- Socio-economic impact: the work has not started yet;
- Water discharge: the work on this topic has been postponed due to a lack of volunteers;
- Wildlife: a FG meeting will be organised in September;
- POs: a draft is being discussed at FG level;
- Values chart: the work is also ongoing, comments are being collected on a first draft;
- Agricultural promotion policy: the draft is awaiting approval at WG level;
- Report on sustainability by STECF: this topic will be discussed in the FG on Level-playing field.

#### 4. AAC Budget 2020-2021: update on ongoing financial year

**The Secretariat** presented an update on the budget of the ongoing financial year.

**Addy Risseeuw (PO Mosselcultuur)** pointed out that there has been a lot of improvisation this year and complimented the Secretariat for their work and clear presentation.

**Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA)** agreed and congratulated the AAC on its use of the budget to use more interpretation and translations. **Javier Ojeda (Chair)** agreed but suggested to keep an eye on these costs when the physical meetings will resume.

#### 5. AAC communication videos

**Javier Ojeda (Chair)** recalled that the main objective of the AAC is to provide advice to the EC and MS. But there is a need to attract new members and increase visibility. The idea behind the videos is to disseminate our recommendations among a wider public.

**The Secretariat** reminded that the idea of producing the videos has already been approved by the ExCom. The present discussion relates to the format of those videos.

**Javier Ojeda (Chair)** said that no members of the AAC will appear in the videos. Ideally, it will be an animated film. **Luisa Alvarez (FEDEPESCA)** suggested to focus on LinkedIn rather than Twitter and **Javier Ojeda** answered that the videos will be shared on all the AAC social medias.

Several members had doubts about the possibility to create balanced videos with dissenting opinions. **It was agreed to focus only on recommendations that were approved by consensus.**

**The Secretariat will be working on the next steps.**

## **6. InterAC meeting (15/07/2021)**

**Javier Ojeda (Chair)** noted that, with Charlina Vitcheva as Director General of DG MARE, the number and quality of Inter-AC meetings have improved.

Regarding the new financial conditions, **the Secretariat** explained that the new system will run for 4 years before revaluation. Controls on the use of the budget will happen at end of the financial year and the AAC's efficiency will be evaluated on the basis of its annual Work Programme (WP) realisation. The WP will therefore need to be reviewed with quantifiable objectives that can be evaluated at the end of the year. However, the new system remains very vague and the methodology will only be presented at the next InterAC meeting.

On the draft Delegated Act (DA) on the functioning of ACs - including the criteria for the classification of the members of the Advisory Councils in the two categories of stakeholders and the external reviews -, the AAC delivered the following opinion that had been agreed on with the Vice-Chairs:

- The AAC appreciates the effort of DG MARE to assure transparency, balanced representation, consensus-seeking and respect of all opinions expressed.
- The AAC does not understand the imbalance in the DA (as in previous legislation) between the insistence on taking special care of the representation of small-scale fleets, while at the same time not including a single reference to the representation of aquaculture microenterprises.
- The AAC appreciates the emphasis to attract other interest groups.
- In the Annex for improving the criteria for classifying members of the Advisory Councils under the categories 'sector organisations' or 'other interest groups' we miss specific indications for organisations dedicated to: (1) animal health, (2) research, and (3) training and education.

The ACs' Secretariats have requested an extension of the deadline for the open public consultation which is now opened until September 10.

**Javier Ojeda (Chair)** said that an internal discussion will be launched to be able to respond to the consultation before the deadline. He sees this DA as an amelioration from the previous situation. **The Secretariat** mentioned that the other ACs suggested to make a common contribution but **Javier Ojeda** answered that first, the AAC should focus on its own contribution to have a consensus. The process will be opened to all AAC members and he encouraged everyone's participation to prepare this internal work, even if they agree with everything, which is also important to tell.

**Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA)** suggested to use the remaining money of this year's budget to start working on the external evaluation of performance. **The Secretariat** answered that this costs around 12 000 € for a year, 24 000 €/two years to have a good evaluation. **Javier Ojeda (Chair)** suggested that the

secretariat asks to an expert whether we could already draw some lessons from the internal evaluations that we have been carrying out this year.

**The Secretariat** will start looking for somebody and will also compile the results from previous internal evaluation questionnaires.

## **7. AAC members' activities outside the AAC**

**Javier Ojeda (Chair)** recalled that there has been a proposal to hold a meeting to watch the video from Essere Animali on the Greek production of sea bass and sea bream<sup>1</sup> and to discuss on its contents.

A first discussion will take place in the Fish Welfare FG meeting of 29 July. All WG1 members will be invited to take part to this meeting.

## **8. Proposal to draft a letter to the Member States following the Commission's note on Organic shellfish farming waters' quality**

**The Secretariat** informed the ExCom that the EC has given its approval to share the note received by the AAC.

**A draft will be submitted to the ExCom for comments and approval.**

## **9. Reimbursement of ex-AAC UK members' travel expenses**

Pier Antonio Salvador (COPA) asked what budget this decision would imply. The Secretariat answered that it shouldn't be more than 1000-1500€ per year.

**Luisa Alvarez (FEDEPESCA)** was against reimbursing UK associations, as it was the UK's decisions to leave to EU. Javier Ojeda (Chair) recalled that UK aquaculture farmers had been against Brexit but had no option but to accept the decision of the country. Furthermore, that EU aquaculture farmers have to gain from collaboration with UK aquaculture farmers, just as the reverse.

**It was approved to request to the GA to renew last year's AAC decision to reimburse the ex-AAC UK members' travel expenses, while mentioning FEDEPESCA's opposition.**

## **10. AAC Budget 2021-2022**

**Cécile Fouquet (Secretariat)** recalled that the approval of the initial budget is necessary to request next year's EC grant. The proposed budget has been

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2IAZefSkME>

established on the hypothesis that all meetings remain physical. She pointed out that more physical meetings would necessarily imply less money for interpretation and translation services.

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

### **11.AAC Work Programme for 2021-2022**

**The Work Programme for 2021-2022 was approved by the ExCom.**

### **12.Calendar for 2021-2022 AAC meetings**

**The Secretariat** presented the results of the questionnaire regarding preferences between physical and virtual meetings.

**The following calendar was approved by the ExCom for 2021-2022 AAC meetings:**

- 8-9 February 2022: WG meetings
- 10 February 2022: ExCom meeting
- 1-2 June 2022: WG meetings
- 12 July 2022: ExCom meeting
- 14 September 2022: General Assembly meeting
- 4-5 October 2022: WG meetings
- 6 October 2022: ExCom meeting

**The Secretariat will make a proposal for a repartition between physical and virtual meetings based on the answers to the questionnaires.**

### **13.Results of the internal survey on the last WG meetings**

**The Secretariat** presented the results from the survey.

**Javier Ojeda (Chair)** insisted on the importance to keep answering these questionnaires.

**Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA)** suggested that breakout rooms in virtual meetings could simulate the way members usually discuss in the corridors during physical meetings. **The Secretariat** took note but pointed that sufficient additional time would need to be planned. **Javier Ojeda (Chair)** added that the confidentiality of these breakout rooms will need to be checked.

### **14. Information point on translation services**

**The Secretariat** recalled that a new contractor had been chosen by the ExCom

but that their services have been disappointing. **The Secretariat** therefore took the liberty of going back to the previous contractor with the latest AAC documents, as the difference in price was not very important for a much better quality.

## 15. Any other business

- GA agenda:

**Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA)** suggested to invite the Rapporteur of the STECF 2020 Economic report on the aquaculture sector.

**The Secretariat will send out an invite.**

**Yannis Pelekanakis (Federation of Greek Maricultures)** requested to add the approval of a new member, HAPO (a replacement of the Federation of Greek Maricultures). **Javier Ojeda (Chair)** confirmed that this is already included in the agenda.

- AAC participation to the Farm to Fork 2021 Conference:

The Chair has been invited by DG MARE to take part to the Farm to Fork 2021 Conference on October 15<sup>th</sup>: a very general presentation will be drafted and approved by the ExCom.

- New visual identity:

**The proposal from the graphic agency was approved.** Further documents will be developed on that basis.

## 9. Conclusions and closing of the meeting

**The next ExCom meeting will take place in-situ in Brussels (tbc) on 28 October 2021.**