

Aquaculture Advisory Council

WG3 Horizontal Issues

24 October (14:30-17:30) and 25 October 2023 (10:00-12:00)

Thon Hotel, Avenue du Boulevard 17, 1210 Brussels – Interpretation available in EN - FR – ES – IT

Minutes

PARTICIPATION LIST

WG3 MEMBERS

Doug Waley (WG Chair)	Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA)
Giulia Malerbi (ALI)	Douglas Waley (Eurogroup for Animals)
Giuseppe Prioli (AMA)	Danilo Santini (FAI CISL)
Andrea Fabris (API)	Pierpaolo Piva (FAI CISL)
Marine Levadoux (CIPA)	Patrizio Giorni (FAI CISL)
Phil Brooke (CIWF)	Catherine Pons (FEAP)
Thibault Pivetta (CNC)	Szilvia Mihalfy (FEAP)
Florian Guillou (CNPMEM)	Javier Ojeda (FEAP)
Bernhard Feneis (COGECA)	Ole Christensen (FEFAC)
Angeles Longa Portabales (Consello Regulador do Mexillon de Galicia)	Alain Schonbrodt (FVE)
Pier Antonio Salvador (COPA)	Yannis Pelekanakis (HAPO)
Philippe Le Gal (CRC Bretagne-Sud)	Teresa Morrissey (IFA)
Brian Thomsen (Danish Aquaculture Association)	Anna Pyc (Polish Trout Breeders Association)
David Basset (EATIP)	Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISK)
Barbara Barbosa (EFFAB)	Catalin Platon (ROMFISH National Fish Farmers Association)
James Hinchcliffe (EFFOP)	Paul Denekamp (Stichting Vissenbescherming)
	Stephane Angeri (Syndicat des Ecloseries et Nurseries de Coquillages Français)

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Invited: Emilia Gargallo (DG MARE), Anna Bobo-Remijn (DG ENVI), Ann-Lisbeth Agnalt (Chair of ICES), Henri Delanghe (DG AGRI), Patrizia Pitton (DG AGRI).

Observers: Joe Redfern (SAGB), Nuno Leite (SEAENTIA), João Rito (Bluebio Alliance), Stefanos Ntimas (Posidonia Aquaculture LLC), Léo-Paul Mayé (Young aquaculture producer), Christian Kirchmayer (Fischzucht Thorhof), Patrizio Giorni (FAI CISL), Nistor George (SC PISCICOLA SA), Sabina Atodiresei (SC Rompesearis S.R.L.), Pedro Reis Santos (MAC).

Secretariat: Cécile Fouquet (AAC Secretariat), Charlotte Musquar (AAC Secretariat), Hélène Hajek (AAC Secretariat).



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MEETING MINUTES

24-25 October 2023

Welcome words by the Chair Doug Waley

The Chair welcomed the participants.

1. Approval of the agenda and last meeting's minutes

The agenda and minutes were approved with the addition of three points in the AOB:

- A point on the follow up of the Commission's answer concerning the paper related to small scale aquaculture by **Ola Öberg (Recirkfirsk)**
- An update by the Secretariat on the Industrial emissions Portal
- A point on DG AGRI as interlocutor for freshwaters aquaculture.

2. DG MARE updates

- o Presentation by **Emilia Gargallo (DG MARE, Policy Officer A2, "Aquaculture Team")**

Emilia Gargallo (DG MARE) updated the WG regarding the four Guidance documents' state of play (Guidance



on good husbandry practices, environmental performance, climate change and inland aquaculture) and on the following points:

- EU Awareness Communication Campaign

The Commission has started to work on it and should have it ready to be launched by the MS in Autumn 2024. She advised that the members send their ideas to the AAC representative in the Task force (Brian Thomsen – AAC Chair).

- Research

A call on selective breeding for organic aquaculture is opened until February 2024. Another open call relates to climate impact for aquaculture until February 2024. DG MARE signed a new framework contract for two studies to be launched in January 2024 on intelligence in aquaculture and on alien species in aquaculture.

- Organic Production Action Plan

An EU Organic Day award is set up every year and she called for more applications by the AAC members.

- EU Reference Centre on aquatic animal welfare

The Centre should be established in 2024.

- Algae

She advised that the AAC members register to the EU4ALGAE initiative and underlined the success of the 1st Algae awareness summit organised a few weeks before in Paris.

- Crisis compensation funds

DG MARE is finalising the report and will share it with the AAC once it is ready.

- On the yearly survey about the evolution of the aquaculture in the EU

The new survey should be ready for 2024.

- Exchange of views with the Working Group members and next steps

Many questions were raised, and **Emilia Gargallo (DG MARE)** took note on some of the points to answer to these in writing.

3. Promoting the involvement of young professionals in aquaculture farming

- Update on the draft recommendation by **Pier Salvador (API)**.

Pier Salvador (API) updated the members on the visit day organised by the AAC on 23 October, where young aquaculture producers met with DG MARE and Members of the European Parliament. He also stressed the need for young professionals to exchange best practices as amongst themselves and the need to involve the new generations to provide them with a network.

Sabina Autodesirei (Romania) pointed out to the main issues that young aquaculture producers had to face, including the limited access to water, the lack of uniformization of national laws and the need for better labelling concerning their products to provide more information to consumers.



- Exchange of views with the Working Group members and next steps.

Many remarks were made by the members on this point including:

- Regretting the fact that the challenges of today are the same as those that the sector was already facing twenty years ago.
- Calling for a greater support to the younger generation of producers to start or to carry on with their activities.
- Calling for the creation of a Common Aquaculture Policy.
- Stressing on the importance of communicating on aquaculture benefits and of supporting its employees.

The WG took note of these points for its future work.

4. Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)

- Update on the evaluation of the Directive by **Anna Bobo-Remijn (DG ENVI)**¹

Anna Bobo-Remijn (DG ENVI) updated the members on the MSFD. She explained that they were currently drafting a Commission evaluation and that internal consultations were ongoing. She stated that they were planning on an interservice consultation at the beginning of 2024 and the adoption by the College of the evaluation in the same year. She pointed out that they had hope for the impact assessment to be finalised in 2024. The Commission proposal and impact assessment are scheduled for 2025.

Javier Ojeda (FEAP) highlighted the need for better coherence between environmental policies.

Anna Bobo-Remijn (DG ENVI) noted that the Commission wishes to strengthen the link between the MSFD and Maritime Spatial Planning and other policies aiming at a sustainable use of the seas.

- How ICES can help farmers in implementing the MSFD by **Ann-Lisbeth Agnalt, Chair of ICES Aquaculture Steering Group)**

Ann-Lisbeth Agnalt (Chair of ICES Aquaculture Steering Group) made a presentation on how ICES could help farmers in implementing the MSFD. She pointed out the fact there were difficulties in implementing the Directive concerning assessment and monitoring. She also noted that the Commission needed the members' experience and feedback for the impact assessment.

A Focus Group was created to draft a Recommendation on this matter in time for the Commission's internal evaluation.

¹ http://aac-europe.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/4.-MSFD-Review-Evaluation.AAC.24_10_23-1.pdf



5. Organic

- Presentation on the state of play of the Organic Action Plan implementation by **Henri Delanghe (DG AGRI)** and **Patrizia Pitton (DG AGRI)**².

WG Chair Doug Waley reminded the fact that a Recommendation had been adopted in July 2023 and had already received a reply from the Commission.

Henri Delanghe and **Patrizia Pitton (DG AGRI)** presented the approaches, goals and twenty-two actions of the Organic Action Plan.

- Exchange of views with the Working Group members and next steps

Andrea Fabris (API) explained that, at some point in Italy, there had been a huge momentum for organic production and many producers had invested in the organic certification. However, retailers put them in competition with other cheaper eco labels, which forced organic companies to shut down. He advised the Commission to focus their efforts on the big retailers' policy.

Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) added that developing organic certifications in shellfish farming was too risky for producers because of the impossible criteria to be met (variables such as water quality are not of their responsibility). He underlined that it was creating an unfair competition between producers.

The Focus group will continue to engage on this matter.

6. Polluter Pays Principle

- Update by the Secretariat on the revision of the Environmental Liability Directive

Cécile Fouquet (Secretariat) explained that the Environmental Liability Directive entered into force in 2007. It established a comprehensive EU-wide liability regime for environmental damage based on the 'polluter-pays' principle. By making those that have caused environmental damage liable for remediation, the ELD provides a strong incentive to avoid damage occurring in the first place. It also makes those whose activities threaten the environment liable for taking preventive action. The ELD supports other EU environmental laws that are designed to protect the environment. The ELD Directive requires the Commission to carry out an evaluation before 30 April 2023, but the results of the evaluation have not been approved yet.

A parallel process is the "Polluters Pays Principle" fitness check. The European Court of Auditors concluded that the principle is not implemented widely and recommended to the Commission to "assess the scope for strengthening the integration of the Polluter Pays Principle into environmental legislation"; to "consider reinforcing the application of the Environmental Liability Directive" and to "protect EU funds from being used to finance projects that should be funded by the polluter".

The fitness check should provide the basis for recommendations in Spring 2024 on how to better implement the principle.

- Exchange of views with the Working Group members and next steps

Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) remarked that in France the Directive is not applied yet as a definition of 'damage' is missing.

² http://aac-europe.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/5.-Organic-OAP_Standard_SOPlayUpdate.pdf



The Chair pointed out that it was too early to aim for a Recommendation but that a Focus Group could be following up this issue.

7. Marine Action Plan

- Update from the Secretariat on the Marine Action Plan (MAP)

Cécile Fouquet (Secretariat) explained that the MAP stands is a Joint Communication by DG MARE and DG ENVI. The wide objective from this communication is to better implement environmental law when managing EU fisheries. She explained that the MAP establishes a new soft law dialogue process (the Joint Action Group) with deadlines and new objectives to push the Member States to fulfil their environmental obligations.

She explained that some provisions about the MS implementation of their Eels Management Plans were also included in this MAP. The joint group is expected to meet again in June 2024. Then there should be a thematic workshop on eels as well as a workshop on fundings for the MAP to which the AAC members will be invited.

- Exchange of views with the members and next steps

Several comments were received. Some members of the WG underlined that they were strongly opposed to this MAP and called for the AAC to communicate against it, while others requested that the AAC is more proactive in the discussions to ask that the aquaculture sector ecosystem services are recognised.

WG Chair Doug Waley reminded that there would be again five seats for representatives to come to the next meeting.

The secretariat will share the forthcoming invitation to attend the Joint Action group with the ExCom members and inform WG3 about the outcomes of these workshops.

8. Consumer information

- Update on Focus Group activities by **Brian Thomsen (Danish Aquaculture)**

Brian Thomsen (Danish Aquaculture) explained that, in its reply to the AAC's recommendation on consumer information,³ the Commission responded to most of their items except on one point: the MS' responsibility.

- Exchange of views with the members and next steps

This topic raised a lot of concerns and questions amongst the members. **Pier Antonio Salvador (COPA)** highlighted that the AAC should have a direct meeting with consumers on that topic while **Brian Thomsen (Danish Aquaculture)** reminded that the AAC should write a new Recommendation on this issue by October 2024.

Cécile Fouquet (Secretariat) suggested to bring the concern expressed by some members about the lack of representation of aquaculture stakeholders' interests in the Market Advisory Council (MAC) at the ExCom level.

³ European Commission's reply to the AAC Recommendations on Food security, Consumer information and the EU data Collection Framework: [European Commission reply to the AAC Recommendations on Food security, Consumer information and the EU Data Collection Framework – aac-europe](#)



The WG Chair Doug Waley noted that a Focus Group on this matter was already constituted and could receive the help of legal advice to shape this new Recommendation.

9. Algae

- Update on the Focus Group activities by **Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISK)**

Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISK) explained that the FG will have a new meeting to discuss possible recommendations to be shared with the EU₄Algae Consortium. He underlined that a lot of research projects were being done and advised that the WG could have some kind of mapping done on the topic.

Cécile Fouquet (Secretariat) mentioned the recent publication of a Horizon 2020 algae projects portfolio analysis⁴.

- Exchange of views with the members and next steps

Andrea Fabris (API) mentioned that the use of algae for human consumption was very interesting but should be further looked into to know how much algae were safe and healthy to consume.

Pedro Reis (MAC) mentioned that the MAC did some advice about algae back in June and that they already had received a reply from the Commission.

Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) pointed out that many centres of multiplication were missing while they could help producers to gain access to different types of algae.

The FG will have an upcoming meeting to discuss possible new recommendations to be shared with the EU₄Algae Consortium. A mapping could be done on this topic in the nearby future.

10. Research for aquaculture

- Presentation of seminar results by **David Basset (EATIP)**⁵

WG Chair Doug Waley reminded that the AAC organised a Seminar on Research in Aquaculture around Focus Group leader **David Basset (EATIP)** on the 8 September.

David Basset (EATIP) presented the Seminar's conclusions:

- The EU funded research landscape relevant for aquaculture is complex and multilayered, and aquaculture is usually not seen as very relevant. Research funding is extremely competitive between the aquaculture production different sectors.
- Research funding is often giving the priority to the EU policy objectives i.e., the Green Deal, whether than to what industry or stakeholders would prioritise themselves.
- The AAC could advise MS on research funding priorities (about 90% of European Union research funding comes from the Member States).

⁴ Horizon 2020 algae projects portfolio analysis, October 2023, Publications Office of the EU: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/548eb614-68cc-11ee-9220-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

⁵ http://aac-europe.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/11.-EATiP-Slides-for-AAC_FINAL.pdf



The seminar attendees talked about establishing a formal Focus Group. David Basset agreed to chair that Group.

Interesting three case studies in the slides will be circulated which are looking at research facilities for shellfish. The AAC could send a request to the Commission to better take into considerations the technology platforms and listen to what EATIP is proposing. A Recommendation to the Commission could be written promoting the work of EATIP. A Focus Group will be called and launched shortly.

11. AOB

- Follow up of the Commission's answer concerning the paper related to small scale aquaculture by **Ola Öberg (Recirkfisk)**

Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISK) ask that a Focus group is organised to discuss the request for a study to DG MARE.

- Industrial emissions Portal

The **European Environmental Agency (EEA)** was contacted in relation with the work on the Industrial Emissions, but no response was received yet despite reminders.

- A point on DG AGRI as interlocutor for freshwaters aquaculture.

Bernhard Feneis (Cogeca) explained that freshwater farmers should work on a draft paper to discuss their place in DG MARE's scope instead of DG AGRI. He called for the creation of a FG.

- MSFD update:

A Focus group will be created and Javier volunteered to lead it.

Conclusion of the two-days of meeting

The Chair concluded the meeting.

The next WG3 meeting will take place on 20 February 2024, online.

