

Aquaculture Advisory Council

Working Group 1 - Finfish meeting

12 June 2024 (13:30-17:30)

Thon Hotel EU – Rue de la Loi 75 – 1000 Brussels – Interpretation available in EN - FR – ES – IT

Minutes

PARTICIPATION LIST

WG1 MEMBERS

Andrea Fabris (API, Chair)	Bernhard Feneis (COGECA)	Javier Ojeda (FEAP)
Phil Brooke (CIWF, Vice-Chair)	Pier Salvador (COGECA)	Maria Luisa Alvarez Blanco (FEDEPESCA)
	David Bassett (EATIP)	Yannis Pelekanakis (HAPO)
Melanie Haslauer (ALFAA)	Douglas Waley (Eurogroup for Animals)	Teresa Morrissey (IFA)
Isidro Blanquet (APA)	Charlotte Epinay (Eurogroup for Animals)	Anna Pyć (Polish Trout Breeders Association)
Giulia Malerbi (Aquatic Life institute)	James Hinchcliffe (EFFOP)	Nathalie Gamain (OFI)
Marine Levadoux (CIPA)	Catherine Pons (FEAP)	Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISK)
Florian Guillou (CNPMEM)	Szilvia Mihálffy (FEAP)	Paul Denekamp (Stichting Vissenbescherming)

Excused:

Brian Thomsen (Danish Aquaculture),
Catalin Platon (ROMFISH).

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Invited: Ester Alaez-Pons (DG SANTE), Beatriz Guerra Román (EFSA), Laurent Sabeau (Prunier Manufacture)

Observers: Wasseem Emam (Ethical Seafood Research), Valentin Rosca (Moldovan Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry), Dumitru Cocieru (Moldovan Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry), Viorica Turcanu (Moldovan Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry), Vasile Capatina (Moldovan Bureau for European Integration)

Member States Experts: Yas Farjad (French State Secretariat for the Sea and Biodiversity), Francesco Lombardo (Maltese Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights), Rui Oliveira (Portuguese Directorate-General for Natural Resources, Safety and Maritime Services).

Secretariat: Cécile Fouquet (AAC Secretariat), Charlotte Musquar (AAC Secretariat), Justine Marrot (AAC Secretariat).



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MEETING MINUTES

Welcome words by the Chair

Andrea Fabris (Chair) welcomed the present participants.

1. Adoption of the agenda and approval of the Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting and the agenda were approved without modifications.

The first point on the Development of codes of good practice on the management of aquatic diseases was cancelled. The AOBs were discussed at the beginning of the meeting.

8. AOB & Conclusions

Three AOBs were added by the Secretariat:

- **European Medicines Agency's survey on novel veterinary medicines**

The secretariat will send the link to the members. The survey is open until 30 June.

- **Essere Animali's invitation**



The Italian animal welfare NGO “Essere Animali” is organizing a webinar on 4 July at 12:00 and the AAC was invited to make a small presentation about the AAC recommendations concerning fish welfare, which the Chair proposed to be done by **Phil Brooke (CIWF)**.

After a debate between the Working Group members, the Chair decided that the secretariat will ask Essere Animali more information about the webinar and will submit the decision to the ExCom.

- **Webinar with the EEA – Industrial Emissions Directive on 3 July**

The Secretariat announced that a webinar with the European Environment Agency will be organized on 3 July 11:00-12:00 on the matter of the new Industrial Emissions Portal and reporting obligations.

An AOB was added by **Marine Levadoux (CIPA)** concerning the environmental contaminants in the fish farming sector.

She would like to discuss them with the members and the Directorate Generals concerned. She warned against too many reporting obligations about environment surveillance, mentioning the example of Malachite Green. It is often found above the maximum residue limit levels in fish flesh and as the Member States don't have any guidelines on how to operate, the fish farmers are asked to destroy the fish. She foresees the same problem with inorganic arsenic and PFAS.

She proposed to have a common brainstorming with WG2, send a letter to the European Commission and discuss what the AAC could do on this topic.

2. Fish Health

i. Development of codes of good practice on the management of aquatic diseases

- Presentation of work timeline by **WG1 expert Jordi López Ramón (Aquatic Health Solutions)**
- **Exchange of views** with the Working Group members and next steps

This point was cancelled due to last minute unavailability of the expert in charge.

ii. Fish parasites

- Presentation by **Beatriz Guerra Román (EFSA)** of EFSA's new advice on parasites in aquaculture fish¹

Beatriz Guerra Román (EFSA) presented EFSA's new advice on parasites in aquaculture fish published in March 2024. The secretariat informed that the EFSA report will be discussed at the beginning of July at an expert group meeting. The Commission will then decide what to do next.

- **Presentation of draft EC letter** by **Andrea Fabris (Chair)**
- **Exchange of views** with the Working Group members and next steps

The AAC will write a letter to DG SANTE asking what they want to do and requesting clarifications. The Chair, **Javier Ojeda (FEAP)** and **Yannis Pelekanakis (HAPO)** mentioned that they did not agree with

¹ http://aac-europe.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Aquaculture_advisory_council_12_06_2024.pdf



the wordings used which could be one of the points raised in the letter.

Javier Ojeda (FEAP) also emphasized that the data brought by the sector should be more valued and mentioned the situation in Spain with anisakis. He also mentioned the need for more research papers and suggested that EATIP and the draft letter mention it.

A letter will be drafted, and it will be circulated as soon as possible. The Chair also suggested to the WG members to inform their respective Ministries about the Member States meeting on 3 July

3. Sturgeon

- Presentation on "Aquaculture sturgeon and CITES" by **Laurent Sabeau (Prunier Manufacture)**²
Laurent Sabeau (Chairman of FEAP Sturgeon COM) did a presentation on "Aquaculture sturgeon and CITES" to the members.

- Update on Focus Group activities by **Andrea Fabris (Chair)**
- Exchange of views with the Working Group members and next steps

The Chair informed that the **Focus Group will start to draft a recommendation. Laurent Sabeau** was invited to participate in the Focus Group.

4. Fish welfare

i. **Animal welfare EFSA opinion – Farmed salmon and trout**

- Update on the preparation of the EC mandate by **Ester Alaez-Pons (DG SANTE Unit "Animal Welfare")**³

Ester Alaez-Pons (DG SANTE Unit "Animal Welfare") updated the members on the preparation of the European Commission mandate for an EFSA opinion on farmed salmon and trout.

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

Bernhard Feneis (COGECA) asked what kind of work will be done on this topic and if they will go to talk with fish farmers. **Ester Alaez-Pons (DG SANTE Unit "Animal Welfare")** mentioned that they generally do a review of the literature. They are also trying to gather data from stakeholders and the industry, with upcoming public calls for data and information.

Giulia Malerbi (ALI) asked if EFSA plans to work or coordinate with the new Fish welfare reference center. **Ester Alaez-Pons (DG SANTE Unit "Animal Welfare")** mentioned that they will be in contact.

² <http://aac-europe.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/PRESENTATION-AAC-12-06-2024-VERSION-ANGLAISE.pdf>

³ <http://aac-europe.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/AAC-12.06.2024-Trout-mandates.pdf>



Javier Ojeda (FEAP) said that EFSA often disregards data from the industry and the producers. The Commission should explicitly write in their mandate that they must take into consideration the data from farmers and industry.

Douglas Waley (Eurogroup for animals) mentioned that the documents on killing and stunning are mostly relevant but that earlier life stages could also be considered for an update.

ii. Good practices in fish farming

- **Presentation of draft recommendation** by **Phil Brooke (Vice-Chair, FG leader)** and call for case studies
- **Exchange of views** with the Working Group members and next steps

Phil Brooke (CIWF) presented the draft recommendation to the members, asked the members for comments and examples of case studies of good practices.

Yannis Pelekanakis (HAPO) proposed to share information on a case study on sea bream.

Javier Ojeda (FEAP) mentioned that it could be difficult to approach farmers for good practices and that they are not always relevant for everyone. **Yannis Pelekanakis (HAPO)** added that they could be alternative practices.

The draft will be circulated amongst the Working Group for written approval.

iii. EU fish welfare reference center's priorities

- **Presentation of draft recommendation** by **Phil Brooke (Vice-Chair, FG leader)**
- **Exchange of views** with the Working Group members and **next steps**

Phil Brooke (CIWF) presented a document listing the key points raised by the Focus Group members.

Ester Alaez-Pons (DG SANTE Unit "Animal Welfare") mentioned that as the Reference Center is regulated by the Official Controls Regulation, its activities can only be targeted to the competent control authorities. Training NGOs or producers is not possible. The Reference Center will provide training materials to the Member States, which will then be free to forward them to the stakeholders.

The Chair mentioned the importance for the Reference Center to consult stakeholders and the necessity to work on topic on which there is a lack of regulation. **Giulia Malerbi (ALI)** asked about the possibility to have an estimate of funds for improving animal welfare. **Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISH)** mentioned that there is another dimension of welfare that is forgotten, which is the issue of time for the producers. There needs to be a protocol for when there is little time available and urgent action for the animals is needed.

The Focus Group will start to draft a recommendation. The recommendation should be ready by September or early October. **Ester Alaez-Pons (DG SANTE Unit "Animal Welfare")** stressed that the sooner the recommendation is ready the better.

iv. Transport proposals

- **Update** on EC animal transports proposals by the secretariat
- **Exchange of views** with the Working Group members and next steps on potential AAC position



The **secretariat** updated the members on the EC proposal for a regulation on the protection of animals during transport presented in December 2023. The proposal includes provisions for the transport of farmed fish. It generally covers the transport of aquatic animals defined as fish, cephalopods and decapods. Ornamental fish are excluded from the scope. Most of the measures foreseen for the welfare of aquatic animals are included in Annex 2 of the proposed Regulation.

In the Council, the discussions started at Working Party level in the Working Party on Animals and Veterinary Questions and will continue under the Hungarian presidency.

In the European Parliament, the proposal has been referred to the Agriculture and Transport Committees in a joint procedure in February. Daniel Buda (Romania, EPP Group in AGRI) and Anna Duparnay-Grunenberg (Germany, Greens Group in TRAN) have been appointed as Rapporteurs. The PECH committee is associated with Caroline Roose (France, Greens) as Rapporteur for opinion, with exclusive competence over several parts of the Commission's proposal relating to aquatic animals. The proposal was presented in the different committees in March. For the PECH Committee, Caroline Roose presented a Working Document during the last meeting of the mandate (9 April). The ENVI committee is also expected to deliver an opinion.

The process is expected to start again after the election, possibly with the appointment of new Rapporteurs, depending on re-election.

5. Eel

- Update on Focus Group activities by **Andrea Fabris (Chair)**
- **Exchange of views** with the Working Group members and next steps

The Focus Group has developed a draft recommendation. The draft is mainly based on the presentation the Chair did in the technical seminar of DG MARE. Most of it is common with two separate statements from the two different groups of stakeholders.

The Chair is waiting for the last comments and the approval in the Focus Group. The draft will then be circulated in the WG. **The recommendation is due by October 2024.**

6. Domestication

- Update on Focus Group activities by FG leader **Ana Granados (EFFAB)**
- Exchange of views with the Working Group members and next steps

The FG did not meet since the last meeting. The FG leader **Ana Granados (EFFAB)** will start the discussions again.

7. AAC WG1 Work Programme

- Presentation by **the secretariat**
- Exchange of views with the Working Group members

The secretariat presented the draft Work Programme for 2024-2025 and asked members for their ideas and input.



Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISH) mentioned the microbiome in the water, with an experience to check every week and see how it changed over the year. He suggested to recommend that this experience is done in other countries.

Paul Denekamp (Stichting Vissenbescherming) mentioned several topics including sturgeon, domestication and octopus farming.

Douglas Waley (Eurogroup for animals) stated that he will send his contribution in writing to the secretariat.

The Chair mentioned the issue of contaminants in water given its importance, especially for freshwater aquaculture.

Andrea Fabris (Chair) thanked the members for their participation and concluded the meeting.

The next meeting of this Working Group will take place in Brussels on **15 October (morning)**.

