

# Aquaculture Advisory Council

## WG3 Horizontal Issues

19 February 2025 (11:15-17:40)

Online (Zoom) – Interpretation available in EN - FR – ES – IT

## Minutes

### PARTICIPATION LIST

#### WG3 MEMBERS

Douglas Waley (Eurogroup for animals, WG3 Chair),  
Yannis Pelekanakis (HAPO, WG3 Vice-Chair),

Leo Kirchmaier (ALFAA),  
Melanie Haslauer (ALFAA),  
Lorenzo Gennari (AMA),  
António Correia (APA),  
Andrea Fabris (API),  
Pier Antonio Salvador (COPA),  
Giulia Malerbi (Aquatic Life Institute),  
Garazi Rodríguez (APROMAR),  
Marine Levadoux (CIPA),

Phil Brooke (CIWF),  
Thibault Pivetta (EMPA),  
Florian Guillou (CNPMEM),  
Bernhard Feneis (COGECA),  
Angeles Longa Portabales (CRMG),  
Brian Thomsen (Danish Aquaculture),  
David Bassett (EATiP),  
Alexandra Philippe (EBCD),  
James Hinchcliffe (EFFOP),  
Charlotte Epinau (Eurogroup for Animals),  
Javier Ojeda (FEAP),  
Catherine Pons (FEAP),  
Szilvia Mihalfy (FEAP),

Maria Luisa Alvarez Blanco (FEDEPESCA),  
Ole Christensen (FEFAC),  
Alain Schonbrodt (FVE),  
Anna Pyć (Polish Trout Breeders Association),  
Ola Öberg (RECIRKFIK),  
Christian Vorbeck (RECIRKFIK),  
Catalin Platon (ROMFISH),  
Paul Denekamp (Stichting Vissenbescherming).

**Excused:** Anne-Laure Prego-Cauchet (CNC)

#### OTHER PARTICIPANTS

**Invited:** Lana Bezinovic Sostar (DG MARE), Olga Kurpisz (DG ENV), Frans Verstraete (DG SANTE).

**Observers:** Anemarija Kosjek (Committee of the Regions), Wasseem Emam (Ethical Seafood Research), Yves Reichling (Feedback EU), Pedro Reis Santos (MAC).

**Member States Experts:** Péter Lengyel (Permanent Representation of Hungary to the European Union), Magdalena Tenciu (Romanian Institute for Aquaculture), Yas Farjad (French State Secretariat for the Sea and Biodiversity), Francesco Lombardo (Maltese Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Animal Rights), Luke Zammit (Maltese Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Animal Rights), Chantelle Spiteri (Maltese Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Animal Rights), Viktor Boross (Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture), Bence Kóvacs (Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture), Irene Adelaide Forcella (Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty, and Forestry).

**Secretariat:** Cynthia Benites (AAC Secretariat), Justine Marrot (AAC Secretariat), Alicia Mouthuy (AAC Secretariat).

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## MEETING MINUTES

### Welcome words by the Chair Doug Waley

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The Chair welcomed the participants.

#### 1. Adoption of the agenda and last meeting's minutes

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An AOB was added by FEAP on the technical report titled "An analysis of the European aquaculture industry using the aquaculture performance indicators". **The agenda was approved with these changes.**

**The meetings of the last meeting were adopted by written procedure.**

#### 2. DG MARE updates

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- **Presentation by Lana Bezinovic Sostar (DG MARE, Policy Officer A2, "Aquaculture Team")**

**Lana Bezinovic Sostar (DG MARE)** informed the WG regarding the following points:

- **Strategic Guidelines and Guidance Documents**

DG MARE adopted 3 Guidance Documents in December, on access to space and water for freshwater and land-

based aquaculture, energy transition in the EU and climate change adaptation. They are working on the e-learning modules and training for Member States on these three documents. A document on good husbandry practices in aquaculture was also published in December. They are finalizing the document on environmental performance. They last presented the document in November to the Member States and the AAC had an opportunity to send comments on this draft. For this year and next year, DG MARE will be working on documents relating to environmental benefits of aquaculture which can be expected at the end of this year or the beginning of next year. They have an ongoing study on this related to aquaculture in ponds and wetlands and in shellfish aquaculture which will be finished in June. While working on the guidance document on environmental performance, Member States requested to have another document on predators, which should be finalized towards the end of the year. DG MARE will also work on a code of good practices on animal welfare and on the mid-term assessment of the Strategic Guidelines.

- **EU Communication campaign**

DG MARE is finalizing the campaign, and it is ready to be launched. DG MARE is organizing an event to mark the launch of the communication campaign in Brussels on 25 March in the morning. **Lana Bezinovic Sostar (DG MARE)** thanked all possible sponsors for the tasting of aquaculture products at the end of the event.

- **Yearly survey on the evolution of EU Aquaculture**

DG MARE established an annual survey for Member States to capture the evolution of EU aquaculture. It was launched in July last year, all Member States have now responded. The results will be included in the first draft of the Mid-term assessment of the Strategic Guidelines. This draft will be presented during a stakeholder's event on 25 March and circulated before the event. This event will review the progress on the actions in achieving the objectives of the guidelines and look into the implementation of the multi-annual national strategic plans for aquaculture from Member States. Another version of the draft will be presented in May with the comments from the event. They plan to give opportunities to comment for the AAC and the Member States in June with a final publication of the report planned in autumn this year.

- **Review of the CFP and the revision of the EMFAF regulation**

The evaluation of the legal basis of the CFP is taking place this year and it will be finalised early 2026 with the publication of a Staff Working Document. The call for evidence ended in September 2024 and gathered 87 responses. The public consultation was launched on 27 January and will run until 21 April. On the revision of EMFAF regulation, there are still no concrete actions. They are continually supporting the Member States on their implementation of the EMFAF programmes.

- **Vision for Agriculture and Food**

The Vision for Agriculture and Food was published on 19 February. DG MARE was involved in the process. It was suggested to add this point to the agenda of the next meeting.

- **Exchange of views with the members**

**The Chair** mentioned the concerns of the members concerning the logistics of the tasting for the event on the EU communication campaign. **Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISK)** mentioned the problem of licensing in Sweden with local authorities. **Javier Ojeda (FEAP)** expressed his concerns on the guidance document on environmental performance, especially on the indicators. **Pier Salvador (COPA)** mentioned the need to highlight the accomplishments of aquaculture such as the restocking of sturgeon. **Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISK)** and **Catalin Platon (ROMFISH)** mentioned the problems of Member States not reading and applying the recommendations from the European Commission.

### 3. Research for aquaculture

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- Update of FG activities and presentation of a draft recommendation by **FG leader David Bassett (EATIP)**
- Exchange of views with the members and decision on next steps

WG3 has committed to produce a second recommendation before the end of October 2025. **Pier Salvador (COPA)** and **Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISK)** highlighted the bias in aquaculture research funding. **Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISK)** also mentioned the topic of food security and the need to have more research focused on small scale aquaculture. **Lorenzo Gennari (AMA)** Lorenzo pointed out that universities, with their characteristic 'top-down' approach, often produce results that cannot have concrete spin-offs for the sector. The recommendation should provide an answer to this issue. **Florian Guillou (CNPMEM)** suggested to work on objectifying research results. The FG leader took note of the comments.

The draft recommendation will be circulated. Another FG meeting will be organized in March to start discussing the second recommendation on dissemination, communication and exploitation.

### 4. Study in support of the evaluation of the Environmental Liability Directive and its implementation

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- Presentation by **Olga Kurpisz (DG Environment)**<sup>1</sup>
- Exchange of views with the members and decision on next steps

Many WG members reacted to this presentation.

The members will wait for the publication of the evaluation before deciding on the next steps.

### 5. Mid-term evaluation of the new Strategic Guidelines

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- Presentation of a draft recommendation by Focus Group leader **Brian Thomsen (Danish Aquaculture)**
- Exchange of views with the members and decision on next steps

**Brian Thomsen (Danish Aquaculture)** and the Secretariat had a meeting with Tim Huntington, who is leading the mid-term assessment of the Strategic Guidelines, in December. A first FG meeting was organised in December and a draft recommendation has been prepared, which was sent to Tim Huntington in January. He mentioned that they are waiting for the summary report of the Member States answers to the Commission questionnaire in February, as this will provide important input for finalising the recommendation.

The FG leader will decide on the next steps.

### 6. Common Fisheries Policy

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- Update on Focus Group activities by Focus Group Leader **Brian Thomsen (Danish aquaculture)**
- Exchange of views with the members and decision on next steps

The **FG leader Brian Thomsen (Danish Aquaculture)** reminded that the AAC already made different recommendations on the reform of EU aquaculture in relation to the CFP as well as a recommendation on sustainable food policy and concluded that these recommendations will feed into the preparation of the AAC's recommendation. **Ola Öberg (Recirkfisk)** highlighted the need for greater overall knowledge of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://aac-europe.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/ELD-state-of-play-Aquaculture-Council-19-02-25.pdf>

aquaculture, producer's organisations should then be involved. **Marine Levadoux (CIPA)** echoed his comments.

**The FG leader will decide on the next steps.**

## 7. The place of aquaculture in an EU Food Strategy

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- Presentation of a draft recommendation by **FG leader Doug Waley (Eurogroup for animals)**
- Exchange of views with the members and decision on next steps

Following the presentation on this topic at the last WG meeting, a FG meeting was organised in January to discuss the draft recommendation. **Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISK)** mentioned that the definition of what would be a sustainable part of EU food production is missing. He also mentioned the issue of food security which could be increased by having more small-scale production and the issue of financial sustainability. **Marine Levadoux (CIPA)** mentioned that the recommendations to the Member States need to focus more on aquaculture. **Javier Ojeda (FEAP)** mentioned the need to approach other parts of the food industry to have an impact and asked the FG leader what the added value of this recommendation is compared to the EC initiative. **Brian Thomsen (Danish Aquaculture)** suggested to differentiate the general recommendations and the specific aquaculture recommendations. The FG leader took note of the comments.

**A revised draft recommendation will be sent to the FG for approval.**

## 8. Use of satellite data for aquaculture

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- Update of FG activities by **Lorenzo Gennari (AMA)**
- Exchange of views with the members and decision on next steps

**Lorenzo Gennari (AMA)** explained that 2 FG were organised, and one was held with various EU providers of satellite observation (i.e. Mercator, Copernicus). They are willing to collaborate by analysing past case studies and project elements. **Marine Levadoux (CIPA)** questioned the use of satellite data as, in the case of fish farming, the problem relies on getting other users to respect the impact studies for the fish farming site and access to the area. She finds it hard to see the link between satellite data and what could be done with it for fish farming.

**The members are invited to send their inputs to Lorenzo Gennari and the Secretariat will coordinate with the FG leader on the next steps.**

## 9. Industrial contaminants

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- Presentation by **Frans Verstraete (DG SANTE)**<sup>2</sup> on:
  - the review of maximum levels on polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in smoked fish and fishery products
  - the upcoming revisions of maximum levels of industrial contaminants
- Exchange of views with the members and decision on next steps

A joint FG was created between WG1 and WG2 which was then moved to WG3. This recommendation is included in the Strategic Plan of the AAC for 2025. **Thibault Pivetta (EMPA)** and **Florian Guillou (CNPMM)**

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<sup>2</sup> <http://aac-europe.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/AAC-19-02-2025.pdf>

highlighted the need to have more data on shellfish before taking measures that could impact the industry. **James Hinchcliffe (EFFOP)** asked about the maximum limits for feed products. **Marine Levadoux (CIPA)** mentioned that **Thibault Pivetta (EMPA)**, **Andrea Fabris (API)** and herself agreed to work together on drafting a recommendation since there are no FG leader on this issue. **Thibault Pivetta (EMPA)** mentioned that the FG was moved to WG3 due to the link of this issue with animal welfare and the effects of the contaminants on animal welfare.

The FG leaders will decide on the next steps. A call for a FG leader was reiterated. Members are welcome to send additional data to Mr Verstraete.

### 10. Creation of a focus group on ways to transfer aquaculture knowledge to younger generations

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- Presentation by **Ola Öberg (Recirkfisk)**
- Exchange of views with the members and decision on next steps

**Ola Öberg (Recirkfisk)** underlined the wealth of knowledge and the large encyclopaedia among fish producers. It would then be useful to pass on this knowledge to young farmers.

Several members showed their interest in this focus group, and it has been decided that the AAC secretariat will send out an e-mail so that interested parties can register for this focus group.

### 11. Update on ongoing WG3 work by the secretariat

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- Organic aquaculture

**Cynthia Benites (AAC Secretariat)** has followed up on the ongoing work, including the draft letter prepared by **Arthur Fuest (IFOAM Organics Europe)** and sent for comments. **The letter has not yet been approved by the Focus Group.**

### 12. AOB and Conclusions of the WG3 meeting

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An AOB was added by **Szilvia Mihalffy (FEAP)** on the technical report titled "An analysis of the European aquaculture industry using the aquaculture performance indicators" to see if it would be possible to invite one of the authors to give a presentation to the AAC. Many WG members reacted. Due to the interest of the members, the Secretariat and the Chair will look into the possibility of inviting one of the authors to present this report to the AAC.

The Secretariat presented the timeline of the AAC elections in 2025. An email was sent to the members with all the information and deadlines.

The Chair concluded the meeting. The next WG3 meeting will be held in Brussels on 3 June (afternoon) and 4 June (morning).