



AAC Work Program 2021-2022

Number of AAC meetings planned in 2021-2022

Executive Committee	3
General Assembly	1
Working Groups (Finfish, Shellfish, Horizontal Issues)	9 (3 per Working Group)

Summary of broad subject areas

The AAC will work on the following subject areas:

- I. Implementation of the Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU Aquaculture**
- II. Resilience/competitiveness**
 - COVID-19
 - Food safety and food security;
 - Aquatic Animal Health and Welfare;
- III. Green transition**
 - Environmental issues and sustainability concerns;
 - EMFAF state of play;
- IV. Social acceptance/consumer information,**
- V. Knowledge/innovation**
- VI. Cooperation with other Advisory Councils for preparation of joint recommendations.**

Scope for each subject area

I. Implementation of the new Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU Aquaculture

The AAC will implement all the tasks that have been attributed to it by the Annex of the strategic guidelines for sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture. A preliminary meeting to decide on the priority of actions to undertake was organised on 21 June 2021. On the basis of the decisions taken at this meeting, the AAC will take actions to fulfil its attributed missions.

II. Resilience/competitiveness

- **National Strategic Plans** - The AAC will monitor progress and developments in the preparation and implementation of revised National multi-annual plans for aquaculture development (e.g. fish farm development), in close collaboration with Member States and DG MARE; this will be done primarily through consultation with National Associations, Public authorities and the



European Commission. The AAC should prepare a short annual report on progress, delegating this to the individual working groups to provide relevant information.

- **Simplification of Administrative Procedures** - The AAC, in a step by step approach with Member States and DG MARE, will monitor and assess the proposed simplification of administrative procedures (one-stop shop) for obtaining permits and licenses, preparing comparable tables, notably for:
 - Environmental impact assessments at European level in relation to aquaculture;
 - Contributing to the development by the EC of a Guidance Document on simplification of administrative procedure.
- **Enhancing competitiveness of European Aquaculture** - The AAC, via its working groups, will produce a position paper and recommendations on how to enhance the competitiveness of European aquaculture activities, looking at several specific issues to develop and provide AAC advice, where initial topics will include:
 - Sustainability of Feeds and feed ingredients used in Europe as a differentiation aspect;
 - Consumer issues, including communication to consumers, e.g.: ecolabels;
 - Administrative issues, including licensing and insurance.
- **Level Playing Field** - The AAC will continue its work on developing a review of the level playing field for European aquaculture, covering topics that will assist assessment and recommendations for assuring this. Consumer information actions will also be followed, in particular in light with the implementation of the Farm to fork strategy. The AAC will discuss, via its Working Groups, how to provide the consumer with an honest message on welfare/form of production/certification of aquaculture products.

The AAC will support the European Commission in the development of a sustainability element in the revision of the current marketing standards for fisheries and aquaculture products.

➤ **Aquaculture production and management systems**

The AAC will continue or engage in the work on issues related specifically to the production systems and management tasks of aquaculture farms, such as:

- the identification of obstacles to the implementation the Organic Farming Action Plan and the target to significantly increase organic aquaculture;
 - supply of seed and fingerlings;
 - Algae and other lower-trophic species such as shellfish, herbivore and omnivore fish and other invertebrates;
 - new cultivation technologies, etc.
- **Blue growth, blue bioeconomy.** - The AAC will review the contributions, actual and potential, of aquaculture to Blue Growth and its position within the Bio-economy and the Circular Economy. The AAC will support the Commission's work in view of the implementation of the Algae Strategy via its dedicated Focus Group.



➤ COVID-19

- **Consequences of the health crisis on the aquaculture sector** – The AAC will have analysed with the help of an expert the effects of the crisis on the sector and assessing how the European Union support was used by the Member States. Assessment of the long-term effects of the crisis and assessment of solutions to mitigate them. A recommendation should be drafted on the basis of this report's recommendations.
- **Food security** – The AAC has adopted a recommendation in light of the COVID crisis and the need to secure the European Union food supplies. The AAC will continue its work on assessing how aquaculture can contribute to this challenge and feed into the Commission's reflections to develop its Contingency plan for ensuring food supply.

➤ Food Safety

Food safety is a constant concern for EU aquaculture producers and consumers. The AAC will provide advice on how to further improve food safety and to deal with new challenges that may arise, such as, for example:

- **Norovirus and Emerging risks**

➤ Aquatic Animal Health and Welfare

The AAC will release advice on issues such as, for example:

- Availability of veterinary medicines, and biocides in light of the new EU regulations on VMPs and medicated Feed
- A better understanding of microbiota
- Development and use of vaccines and assessment of the licencing and approval processes of vaccines (EU/MS level); autologous vaccines.
- Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR)
- Improving fish welfare and production through a better understanding of fish behaviour and ethology:
 - Rearing and environments
 - Live aquatic animals transport
 - Stunning and Slaughter
 - Behavioural and Operational Welfare Indicators
 - Collecting data on important welfare aspects of aquaculture
- Reproduction and genetics
- Entry into force of the regulations being prepared and ongoing.



III. Green transition

Environmental issues and sustainability concerns

Environmental issues in respect of European aquaculture's operation and development are of prime importance and cover a range of different issues; while some are specific to sub-sectors, many are inter-related. The AAC will provide advice and opinions on issues such as, for example:

- **Definition of sustainable aquaculture** - Discuss and attempt to provide criteria and thresholds in order to better define the term and scope of a “sustainable” aquaculture. A Seminar was organised in June 2021 to reflect on this matter. The AAC will work on finding a consensual definition of this term.
- **EU Nature Directives:** provide assessment of environmental law and guidance being adequately implemented at Member States level and its correlation to the simplification of administrative procedures (cf. part 1).
Water Framework Directive and water protection Regulation for molluscs breeding: the AAC will provide advice to the Commission and Member States as of how to achieve the objectives set by the directive.
- **Marine Strategy Framework Directive:** the AAC will assess the Member States' results as reported to the European Commission in view of the foreseen revision of the Directive.
- **Sustainability of Feeds and feed ingredients feeds,** feed ingredients and feeding are at the top of the list of issues that affect the environmental sustainability of aquaculture. Their responsible sourcing and use are to be discussed in the AAC.
- **Climate change** - The AAC will have analysed with the help of an expert the climate change's impact on the EU's aquaculture sector with respect to both adaptation and mitigation strategies. A recommendation should be drafted on the basis of this report's recommendations.
- **Predators** – The AAC will provide recommendations for the shellfish, freshwater sector and extensive fish culture in Europe, in particular in relation with the predation realised by protected species.
- **Biodiversity**
 - Alien Species, in particular the revision of Reg. 708/2007 relative to the list of allochthonous species acclimated and used in aquaculture without creating risks to biodiversity and ecosystems (i.e., revision of Annex IV)
 - Escapees
 - EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030
- **Ecosystem services** – The AAC will follow up on its work on the issue of the ecosystem services provided by aquaculture activities to make recommendations and propose ideas for their valuation.
- **Marine litter and aquaculture:** The AAC will have analysed with the help of an expert conducted an assessment on the impact of micro-plastics on aquaculture products and filter



feeders and the contribution of aquaculture on marine litter. A recommendation should be drafted on the basis of this report's recommendations.

- Impact on wild fish- sea lice, genetic contamination (escapees), etc.
- **Coordinated Spatial Planning** - The AAC will follow and provide input on these developments, in line with the work on the development of a Guidance Document which is proposed in the new Guidelines, looking specifically at:
 - Criteria for identification of aquaculture zones under MSP directive;
 - Criteria for Multi-user (co-location) multiple economic use.

The AAC will continue its work by developing a preliminary assessment that identifies protected species and habitats that are vulnerable to aquaculture activities and identify examples of existing aquaculture sites that are located in or near protected areas. Furthermore, a preliminary classification will be done of some of the basic needs for various farming methods for aquaculture zones.

➤ **EMFAF – State of Play**

The AAC, via its Working Groups will provide assistance/opinion for the development of new operational programs in line with the new Strategic Guidelines for Aquaculture. Discuss a state by state situation of what each Member State is doing with regards to the EMFAF fund and its aquaculture plans (transparency issue also to be looked at) and reduction of red tape (one stop shop approach).

IV. Social acceptance/consumer information

EU aquaculture stakeholders have specific concerns in relation to the information provided to EU consumers. The AAC will carry on with its reflexion on this topic, including the need to control the information provided to consumers (also for aquaculture products administered by Ho.Re.Ca.)

The AAC will support the work realised by the EC on the implementation of new strategic guidelines for the sustainable development of European aquaculture. In particular, the AAC will support and ensure the broad dissemination by members of the coordinated EU-wide campaign on EU aquaculture.

V. Knowledge/innovation

Special attention will be given to the identification of Research/Development priorities, including new species, production systems, feed ingredients and feed-efficient systems, emerging bio-toxins and shellfish depuration systems.

The AAC will look into ways to better contribute to the dissemination of knowledge and innovation among its members.



VI. Cooperation with other Advisory Councils

The AAC will look at the data collections and analyses of the market/economics of seafood sector pertaining to aquaculture products; provide recommendations on data collections by Member States (e.g. by professional organisations). It will strive to provide joint positions with other ACs (e.g. a common position with the MAC following the publication of EFSA opinions).

- Preparation of joint recommendations
- Contributions to the post-Brexit relations with the UK
- Cooperation with the Markets Advisory Council (MAC) on market and trade issues