

# Aquaculture Advisory Council

## General Assembly

### Minutes

21<sup>st</sup> September 2021 (09:00-13:00)

## PARTICIPATION

**Attendants:** Javier Ojeda (Chair), Paul Denekamp (1<sup>st</sup> Vice-Chair), Addy Risseeuw (2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Chair – Treasurer), Giuseppe Prioli (AMA), Fábio Barroso (APA), Andrea Fabris (API), Pier Antonio Salvador (COPA), Garazi Rodriguez (APROMAR), Philippe Le Gal (CRC Bretagne-Sud), Daniel Coirier (CRC Charente-Maritime), Marine Levadoux (CIPA), Phil Brooke (CIWF), Melanie Haslauer (ALFAA), Anne-Laure Prego-Cauchet (CNC), Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA), Jean-Christophe Raymond (CNPMEM), Bernhard Feneis (COGECA), Brian Thomsen (Danish Aquaculture Association), Søren Anker Pedersen (European Fishmeal), Douglas Waley (Eurogroup for Animals), Jan Kappel (European Anglers Alliance), Danilo Santini (FAI CISL), Catherine Pons (FEAP), Szilvia Mihalfy (FEAP), Yannis Pelekanakis (FGM - HAPO), Ole Christensen (FEFAC), Alexander Döring (FEFAC), Alain Schonbrodt (FVE), Loïc Maine (GMB), Teresa Morrissey (IFA), Constantin Muraru (IPIFF), Anna Pyć (Polish Trout Breeders Association), Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISK), Catalin Platon (ROMFISH), Ana Granados (EFFAB), Luisa Alvarez (FEDEPESCA), Stéphane Angeri (SENC), Stylianos Filopoulos (AAC Secretariat), Charlotte Musquar (AAC Secretariat)

**Excused:** Leo Kirchmaier (ALFAA), Sandrine Rambert (FFA)

**Observers:** Lana Bezinovic Sostar (DG MARE), Camille Gallouze (DG MARE), David Bassett (EATiP), John Dennis (BIM), Efthalia Arvaniti (Submariner Network), Neža Sautet (Slovenia Ministry of Agriculture), Irena Fonda (Fonda Fish Farm), Soizic Schwartz (French Ministry of agriculture), Mateo Djaoudi (French Ministry of agriculture), Anne Oswald (French Ministry of agriculture), Bronius Markauskas (CoR member - Rapporteur on Sustainable blue economy and aquaculture), Rodziewicz Bogna (CoR), Ieva Andriulaityté (CoR Expert), Paloma Carballo Tejero (Spain Ministry of Agriculture), Wasseem Emam (ALI Europe), Amandine Sanvisens (ALI Europe), Alain Körner (Luxembourg Ministry of Agriculture), Marko Koivuneva (FEAP)

**Abbreviations:** **DG** (Directorate-General); **EC** (European Commission); **EP** (European Parliament); **Excom** (Executive Committee), **GA** (General Assembly), **MS** (Member States); **RoP** (Rules of Procedure); **WP** (Work Programme); **F2F** (Farm to Fork); **EMFF** (European Maritime and Fisheries); **CFP** (Common Fisheries Policy)

## MEETING DETAILS

The GA meeting reached quorum.

2 Proxies were received:

- Proxy for Leo Kirchmaier (ALFAA): Melanie Haslauer (ALFAA)
- Proxy for Sandrine Rambert (FFA): Marine Levadoux (CIPA)

The meeting started at 09.00 and finished at 12.55. It took place via zoom, and interpretation was available in English, French, Spanish and Italian.



## MINUTES

### 1. Welcome words by the Chair

**The Chair** welcomed the members and observers and express his appreciation for the increased participation that is a token of the AAC good work.

He also thanked **Cécile Fouquet (Secretariat)** for all her good work in the past years and welcomed her replacement as Executive Secretary of the AAC, **Stylios Filopoulos**.

### 2. Adoption of the agenda and approval of the previous GA meeting minutes – 03 February 2021, Brussels

**The agenda was adopted with no further change.**

**The minutes were adopted with no further change.**

### 3. AAC achievements in 2020-2021

**The Secretariat** presented the AAC achievements during the last year<sup>1</sup>.

**Javier Ojeda (Chair)** thanked the secretariat and highlighted the importance that the new members have joined AAC, as recruitment of new members is very challenging, especially under the Other sector organisations category.

### 4. The new strategic guidelines for sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture

**Charlina Vitcheva**<sup>2</sup>, Director-General of European Commission's the Directorate-General for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs (DG MARE), and **Clara Aguilera**<sup>3</sup>, Member of the European Parliament and AAC referent in the Fisheries Committee, addressed a video-message to the GA.

Members comments to the above messages.

- **Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISK)** mentioned that only 10% of aquaculture products consumption in the EU originated from the EU. He wondered what percentage the EP would call sustainable in terms of food security.
- **Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA)** and **Paul Denekamp (Vice-Chair)** expressed their disappointment that the issues of access to space, water quality and animal welfare were not mentioned by Ms. Vitcheva. **Javier Ojeda (Chair)** recalled that these are general interventions and that those issues are reflected in the

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<sup>1</sup> [Presentation AAC achievements 2020-2021](#)

<sup>2</sup> [DG Charlina Vitcheva Video message AAC GA210921](#)

<sup>3</sup> [MEP Clara Aguilera Video Message AAC GA210921](#)

Guidelines. The issue of access to space was highlighted by a few other members.

- **Pier Antonio Salvador (COPA)** highlighted the importance of the word “competitive”, adding that the EU is in regulating EU production and that efforts should be made to better communicate towards EU consumers.
- **Yannis Pelekanakis (FGM)** also stressed the need to secure a level-playing field regarding imports.
- **Javier Ojeda (Chair)** concluded that the role of the AAC is indeed to be critical and that it will continue to be. He appreciated the InterAC meetings organised by DG MARE. Finally, he thanked the offices of Ms. Vitcheva and Ms. Aguilera for the video messages.

## 5. Fish welfare

### - Short introduction about the AAC’s work this year

**Phil Brooke (CIWF) chair of the Fish Welfare FG** recalled that the past year has been very important for the AAC with a successful seminar on fish welfare and with the inclusion of animal welfare as a separate chapter in the Guidelines. He also noted the important role that the AAC will have in their implementation.

### - Intervention by Mrs. Carmem Avram, Member of the European Parliament (MEP) and AAC referent in the Fisheries Committee

**MEP Carmen Avram (S&D - Romania)** presented her work with the Committee of Inquiry on the Protection of Animals during Transport (ANIT).

### Exchange of views.

- **Andrea Fabris (API)** stressed out the importance of research and scientific data regarding fish welfare, particularly during transport. He pointed out that species have different needs, and a broad approach is not the way to go. and called for the creation of a reference centre. **Carmen Avram** agreed and said that is necessary to separate the discussion, to focus on the actual needs of the specific species.
- **Paul Denekamp (Vice-Chair)** expressed his appreciation on the fact that fish welfare during transport will be discussed as a specific issue. He added that transport should be reduced to avoid unnecessary stress. **Carmen Avram** answered that an impact assessment is needed on the issue and that financial incentives should also be discussed to motivate changes. **Javier Ojeda (Chair)** added that ensuring fish welfare would be a win/win solution for everyone.
- **Ana Granados (EFFAB)** agreed with the points made by Andrea Fabris and added that the issues mentioned by Ms. Avram, including the 8 hrs limit, are indeed a real problem for the sector.
- **Phil Brooke (CIWF)** insisted on the need for support and resources, including reference centres.
- **MEP Carmen Avram (S&D - Romania)** thanked the members for their comments and their offer for help and support. She noted that consumers are also asking for better welfare, therefore it is the EP’s duty and obligation to set better welfare rules.

## 6. Exchanging good practices: promoting EU aquaculture at the national level

**Richard Donnelly (BIM)** and **Áine-lisa Shannon (BIM)** presented the progress of the educational project Aquaculture Remote Classroom (ARC) in Ireland<sup>4</sup> that was developed by the Ireland's Seafood Development Agency- Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM),

A lively discussion followed with participants that showed keen interest and asked additional information about the project

Key remarks

- Animal welfare: welfare is important to the fish farmers, and they have been thinking about adding modules to the class to discuss fish sentience and bring awareness.
- Attendance: 55 schools were visited by the project, and 7000 students have attended the online webinars during COVID.
- Financing: ARC received support from the EMFF.

Considering the keen interest of members about Aquaculture Remote Classroom (ARC) it was decided of gathering more information about the project (e.g. financial information, etc) looking to export this good practice in other MS. BIM agreed to share more information. AAC will follow up with the BIM

**Efthalia Arvaniti (SUBMARINER)** also took the opportunity to share information about the Operational Decision Support System (ODSS) for mussel/seaweed farming<sup>5</sup>.

## 7. AAC new members

### - HAPO:

**Yannis Pelekanakis (FGM – HAPO)** presented the Hellenic Aquaculture Producers Organization (HAPO) who requested to join the AAC in replacement of the Federation of Greek Mariculture (FGM)<sup>6</sup>.

**HAPO's membership to the AAC was approved by the General Assembly.**

**HAPO's membership to the 'Sector Organisations' group was approved by the General Assembly.**

### - ExCom vacant seat for the sector organisations:

**The 'Sector Organisations' group of the AAC elected HAPO as a representative to occupy the vacant seat in the ExCom.**

<sup>4</sup> [Presentation of Aquaculture Remote Classroom \(ARC\) by BIM](#)

<sup>5</sup> [SUMBARINER Operational Decision Support System \(ODSS\) for mussel/seaweed farming](#)

<sup>6</sup> [HAPO Presentation](#)

## 8. 2021-2022 AAC Work Programme

**The Secretariat** presented the 2021-2022 AAC Work Programme<sup>7</sup>.

Comments by the members

- **Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISK)** suggested to continue the work on food security as a separate topic from food safety.
- **Paul Denekamp (Vice-Chair)** suggested, regarding the AAC work on animal health and welfare, to focus first on one species to have a better understanding of its behaviour.
- **Javier Ojeda (Chair)** acknowledged the comments and pointed out that the WP does not require to be modified in order to work on these suggestions.

**The Work Programme 2021-22 was approved as presented.**

## 9. 2021-2022 AAC Budget

**The Secretariat** presented the 2021-2022 AAC Budget.

Comments by the members

- **Alexander Döring (FEFAC)** asked if hybrid meetings would imply higher costs. **Cécile Fouquet (Secretariat)** answered that, presently, there is no optimal solutions for interpretation in hybrid meetings; it would be like organising two separate meetings, therefore doubling the costs.
- **Addy Risseeuw (Vice-Chair - Treasurer)** advised to choose either in-situ or virtual meetings, pointing that, along with higher costs, organising hybrid meetings is also more complicated. He also advised the General Assembly to approve the draft budget.
- **Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA)** recalled that he has made a proposal to initiate the works of the external performance review. **Javier Ojeda (Chair)** answered that the new rules on the functioning of the ACs (that make external performance reviews compulsory) have not yet been adopted. Once they starts applying, the AAC will have 5 years to carry out the first review.

**The AAC Budget 2021-22 was approved as presented.**

## 10. Calendar for next year of AAC meetings

**The Secretariat** presented the dates agreed on by the ExCom for 2022, as well as a repartition between in-situ and virtual meetings.

Several members expressed their appreciation for virtual meetings: it is an effective format which allows to save costs as well as to have a lesser impact on the environment.

**The calendar was approved as presented:**

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<sup>7</sup> [2021-2022 AAC Work Programme](#)

- February 8, 9 and 10: WG and ExCom meetings - **VIRTUAL**
- June 1 and 2: WG meetings – **IN-SITU**
- July 12: ExCom meeting - **VIRTUAL**
- September 14: General Assembly - **VIRTUAL**
- October 4, 5 and 6: WG and ExCom meetings – **IN-SITU**

## 11. Reimbursement of former AAC UK members' travel expenses

The Chair reminded previous decisions on the issue and ask the GA for reaching a new agreement.

Comments by the members

- **Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISK)** asked if it would be possible to receive financing from the UK or British associations. It was asked to the **Secretariat** to enquiry DG MARE AC coordinator Pascale Colson for confirmation of the possibility of such contribution
- **Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA)** said that, as long as the special committee for fisheries is not in place, he is in favour of maintaining this decision. **Bernhard Feneis (COGECA)** agreed and asked how much of the budget would be used for this. **Cécile Fouquet (Secretariat)** answered that it would be less than 1%.

**The proposal of inviting the former British AAC members to all 2022 AAC meetings as Active Observers and therefore allowing them to claim reimbursement for their travel expenses was approved by consensus.**

## 12. New rules on the functioning of ACs

**The Secretariat** updated the General Assembly on the new rules on the functioning of the ACs:

- New financial conditions: A new system of lump sums has been planned by the EC but still lack clarity at this stage. The total amount of the grant will be defined for 4 years based on past spending. Controls will be done at the time of the introduction of the grant request. The efficiency of the ACs will also be evaluated based on the realisation of the WP (which until now was more of an informative document for the EC). The Secretariat will receive more details on this during the next Inter-AC meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> of November.
- Draft delegated act on the functioning of the ACs:
  - o One of the main points of the draft delegated act is to introduce new criteria to classify members who join the ACs into stakeholder organisations or other interest groups. One of these criteria will be to look at the source of the funding of the candidate.
  - o A second point is the need to carry external performance evaluation every five years. The Secretariat has gathered from other ACs experience that this process takes up to two years and costs around 12 000 €.

The new delegated act should be adopted by the end of 2021 or beginning of 2022.

Comments by the members

- **Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISK)** remarked that small-scale aquaculture needs to be represented among AAC members. **Javier Ojeda (Chair)** agreed on the importance of highlighting this.

- **Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA)** suggested that the Secretariat creates a form to request financial information from the candidate members, as the information from the transparency registry will not be sufficient.

### 13. Any other business

**No other business was discussed**

### 14. Conclusions of the meeting

The Chair summarized the decisions taken during the meeting:

- The minutes of the previous GA meeting were approved
- Approval of the 2021-2022 Working Programme, budget and meetings calendar;
- HAPO was approved as new member of the General Assembly, as part of the Sector Organisations group and member of ExCom;
- The Secretariat will gather information on the ARC educational project and share it with the members in view of exporting it in other MS;
- The participation of former AAC members from UK to all 2022 AAC meetings as Active Observers and the right to claim reimbursement for their travel expenses was approved. In parallel, it was decided that the Secretariat will ask the EC for the possibility of external contributions (e.g. from former members the UK);
- In view of the adoption of the new delegated on the functioning of the ACs, it was asked to the secretariat to develop a form to require information on the funding of potential new members

### 15. Date and place of the forthcoming General Assembly meeting

**The next GA meeting will take place on September 14, 2022.**

**An extraordinary GA is foreseen for February 2022 to approve the final 2020-2021 budget.**