

Aquaculture Advisory Council

Executive Committee (EXCOM) meeting

28th October 2021 (10:00-13:00)

Online meeting via Zoom – Interpretation available in EN - FR – ES – IT

Minutes

PARTICIPATION LIST

EXCOM MEMBERS

Javier Ojeda, Chair

Sector organisations

Marco Gilmozzi, Szilvia Mihalfy, Catherine Pons (FEAP)

Yannis Pelekanakis (HAPO)

Bernhard Feneis (COGECA)

Ole Christensen (FEFAC)

Addy Risseeuw (PO Mosselcultuur), 2nd Vice-Chair – Treasurer

Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA)

Giuseppe Prioli (AMA),

Philippe Le Gal, Anne-Laure Prego-Cauchet (CNC)

Other interest groups

Paul Denekamp (Stichting Vissenbescherming), 1st Vice-Chair

Douglas Waley (Eurogroup for Animals),

Phil Brooke (CIWF)

Excused: Pier Antonio Salvador (COPA), Luisa Alvarez (FEDEPESCA)

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Working Group Chairs: _Andrea Fabris (WG1 Chair), Stéphane Angeri (WG2 Chair),

Observers: Pascale Colson (DG MARE)

Secretariat: Stylianos Filopoulos (AAC Secretariat), Charlotte Musquar (AAC Secretariat)



MEETING MINUTES

1. Opening by the Chair

Javier Ojeda (JO) confirmed the quorum and briefly explained the principles for participation and the use of the virtual meeting platform.

JO asked the members to clearly indicate in their zoom profile (and/or any other AAC virtual meeting platform) their full name and the name/acronym of their organisation. He mentioned that participation in the meetings is reserved to the members and to guests by invitation and that we should be able to identify at any given time participation.

JO in his welcome words expressed his content for the successful transition in AAC Executive Secretary position, the adaptation of the new visual identity and the successful working group meetings during the previous days.

2. Adoption of the agenda and approval of the Minutes of the last meeting (20/07/2021)

JO asked if the members approved the draft proposed agenda. No comments and no objections were raised and the Minutes were approved.

Stylianos Filopoulos (SF) informed that the Minutes of the last EXCOM Meeting on 20/07/21 were shared via email and no comments were received. The JO asked if the members approved the minutes. No comments and no objections were raised and the Minutes of the EXCOM meeting of 20/07/21 were approved.

3. Working Groups: Updates

JO thanked the chairs of the WG for their work and asked the WG1 and WG2 Chairs and WG3 Vice-Chair to present their respective WG activities and proceedings of the meetings.

WG1 FINFISH

Andrea Fabris (AF) (WG1 Chair) presented an overview of the WG1 work during 2020-21, the published recommendation and the on-going work. He listed the topics that were discussed during the meeting, and he gave a brief overview.

1. Review of scientific Projects: (EUROCIGUA and AQUA FAANG)
2. Information on Medicine law (REG (EU) 2019/04 and 2019/06) from the European Medicines Agency
3. Public consultation on Animal Welfare revision of EU legislation (a poll to decide on next steps)
4. Proposal on the Welfare during transport of fish (presentation of the draft recommendation, comments, and next steps)
5. Proposal on Reference centres of fish welfare (Presentation of the draft recommendation, comments, and next steps)
6. Presentation on Microbiota (Expression of interest to develop a dedicated FG and develop a recommendation on the topic)
7. Work Programme and priorities

He expressed his appreciation for the successful meeting and the numerous presentations by the external experts. AF highlighted the presentation on Microbiota and the importance of the topic.

AF also referred to the successful mentimeter exercise to rate the various WG1 priorities.

- Priorities and Strategic Guidelines



JO pointed out the importance of looking into the AAC actions on the Sustainable Aquaculture Strategic Guidelines by the EC when prioritising actions as we are expected to deliver on these topics.

- EU Algae Strategy

Bruno Guillaumie (BG) commented that the EU Algae Strategy that is mentioned as indicative priority for the WG1, is more relevant to be dealt with in the WG2. AF agreed that this topic has a wider impact and therefore should not only be an issue of WG1. JO suggested to consider addressing this either in the WG3 for horizontal issues or through an inter-WGs cooperation like the recommendation ecosystem services. JO also recognised the need to improve members knowledge and participation in WGs activity and asked to assess FG working procedure, to allow WG members that are not participating in the FG, to join the debate.

WG2 SHELFISH

Stephane Angeri (SA) (WG2 Chair) presented an overview of the ongoing work and the respective discussion during the WG meeting on 27/10/21.

- **Bird Predation on shellfish farms:** SA mentioned that during the meeting there was an interesting presentation by 2 Professors from the Wageningen University on a method to attract shellfish allies, and mentioned that while this was interesting, it might be complex to set up and not effective especially in the case of bird predation. He highlighted the need to continue the discussion on the topic.
- **Norovirus alert system:** SA mentioned that the WG agreed that it is the responsibility of MS to provide good quality water for farms. SA mentioned that the WG discussed the current state of play and relevant projects (Oxyvir 2) and the need to find an effective alert/prevention system. The respective draft recommendation was approved by the WG2 and will be sent to the EXCOM for approval. The recommendation among others is calling for projects in Horizon Europe to set up a system in at least 4 MS and in two types of basins.
- **Loss of biodiversity and emergence of new pathogens:** SA mentioned that FG has been working on this complex subject and decided to focus on the emergence of new pathogens following climate change. The WG2 acknowledged good work so far by the FG and the rapporteur and asked for the continuation of the work for the final drafting and approval of the recommendation.
- **Coherence of shellfish water protection zones:** SA mentioned that FG during its work identified inconsistencies between different regulations (WFD etc.). The FG has reached agreement on several points and respectively called for action. The recommendation was approved by the WG2 and will be sent to the EXCOM for approval

JO commented that it is very frustrating to see the insufficient treatment of sewage waters in EU countries. It's a real problem for us shellfish producers. At least the EC has tools to fine the countries.

WG3 Horizontal Issues

Paul Denekamp (PD) (WG3 Co-Chair) and SF presented an overview of the WG3 meeting on 26 and 27/10/21 and respectively the ongoing work. Below there is the summary per agenda point:

- **DG mare updates**
Communication Campaign: DG MARE will develop an EU wide communication campaign with the objectives to bring more attention to the sector and to inform citizens about aquaculture benefits. DG MARE will develop a toolbox in collaboration with communication experts to support campaigns on EU



Aquaculture towards consumers. To improve the relevancy and impact of the tools, the exercise will include an ask MS and ACC representatives to reflect and provide their feedback. The work is expected to start by the end of February, with an approx. 6 months' time frame.

STECFs Report on sustainability and marketing standards: Main conclusion from the report is that more info needs to be collected. The impact assessment will have to provide information on different options. WG raised the problem with the limited period of comments during the impact assessment.

Update Reference methods for CO₂ footprint: The EC will assess the comments received and modify the draft accordingly. Then it will proceed to at least three supportive studies and the work will continue and extend on environmental performance. The WG₃ highlighted the need of reference methods for Co₂ absorption by shellfish.

- **COVID 19:** The report was approved and the WG will now develop a recommendation.
- **Marine Litter:** The report was approved with the need of a minor clarification in the text. The WG will now develop a recommendation.
- **Aquaculture Values:** The WG manage to find a compromise during the meeting and the draft recommendation was approved.
- **Socio-economic impact of aquaculture:** The WG debated the actual focus of the recommendation. They agreed that social accessibility is a prerequisite for sustainable development and that the recommendation should be developed with the classical definition of socio-economic impact. Focus on the effect of aquaculture to economic development of rural areas, the effect on job creation, etc.
- **Climate impact:** The Secretariat has launched the process of recruiting an expert and the FG will proceed in hiring an expert and following up work.
- **Sustainable aquaculture definition:** A first draft was discussed and the WG asked the FG to consider some changes and finalising first draft.
- **Wildlife:** There is no consensus and there is need for further discussion and work.
- **Organic Aquaculture:** The WG₂ acknowledged the good work and reflected on further issues related to organic aquaculture and the recommendation. The WG will continue the work on the topic.
- **Strategic guidelines:** The secretariat will develop a checklist to make sure that work is addressing the tasks allocated to AAC by the strategic guidelines.
- **PEFCR:** The WG will develop a recommendation to raise its concern and will proceed in the hiring of an expert
- **Inception Impact Assessment on Sustainable food system framework initiative:** A Public consultation planned for first quarter of 2022. An FG will be established to work on the topic.
- **WG₃ Priorities 2021-22:** The WG₃ used the Mentimeter to rate different priorities. The results will be further processed to drive an indicative list of action.
- **small-scale aquaculture definition:** The WG₃ also during the meeting had a very quick and productive debate on the definition of small-scale aquaculture.

Other Comments

General comments on WG Priorities 2021 – 22

JO mentioned that the topics of the FG should be well selected to address real needs and secure the commitment and contribution from the members. They should also consider the Strategic Guidelines.



Everybody appreciates the use of the Mentimeter. Members commented that results during live polls should be shown with the closing of the poll.

Bernard Feneis asked in future discussion to avoid the use of the word industry when referring to aquaculture farmers. Considering that the large percentage of the European aquaculture is small scale enterprises and often family driven, the industry word is not appropriate. EXCOM recognised that this is linguistic issue and decide to use the term sector organisation.

4. AAC Budget: update on ongoing financial year and closing of the accounts (11:25)

JO passed the floor to the Executive Secretary Stylianos Filopoulos (SF) to present the topic. SF mentioned that the execution of the budget is moving as planned. SF mentioned that the external auditors will proceed to the annual audit on the 2nd of December and the annual final report will be sent to the EC by the end of the year.

BG asked about the current level of the budget execution and the negotiation with the EC about the delegated act and the future budget.

SF mentioned there is going to be an underspending. It is estimated that about 90% of the budget will be spent. SF explained that COVID has disrupted AAC work, and especially in person meetings which is a significant cost for AAC. While efforts are made to reallocate budget to serve needs due to the increased workload (higher number of recommendations, higher number of virtual meetings resulted in higher interpretation and translation cost, it is not always possible to foresee some underspending. SF gave an example with the change of the October Meetings from in person to virtual, where it was not possible due to the last-minute change and the closing of the financial year in October to reallocate the available budget.

SF mentioned that he took good note of the comment to foresee such issues to allow wherever possible, appropriate budget adjustments. He also mentioned that this is especially necessary due to the limited ability of retaining reserves.

Regarding the current changes with the delegated act, SF refer once again in the appreciation of the DG MARE on the comments received. The publication is work in progress and the AAC secretariat is following this closely.

Bernhard Feneis (BF), asked if AAC budget underspending may raise the risk of reduced contribution by the EC. SF mentioned that he is not aware of such an issue, but he acknowledged that this is indeed a valid point and that the Secretariat will be closely following it in coordination with other Advisory Councils and with the EC.

The Treasurer Andy Risseeuw (AR) thank BG for his question and SF for his clear explanation. He mentioned that as we are getting more familiar with virtual meeting and adapting them in our operation. In the following years we should better define AAC goals and expenses to improve the use of the available budget.

Pascale Colson (PC) from DG MARE mentioned that commission is planning to change its financial approach by introducing lump sum amounts per AC. He highlighted that AAC should ask a contribution that is as close as possible to the real needs. JO thank PC for being close to the AAC and helping a constructive dialogue and he mentioned that we are a rather new AC, and we are keeping increasing our activity we hope that the lump sum will not create a ceiling in our growth. PC mentioned that current and future needs should be well documented when calculating the EC lump sum amount.

5. Assessment of 2020-21 contracts

SF presented a list of the current contracts with rapporteurs and external experts and the work that has been



achieved so far. Based on the deliverables and the level of the contract accomplishment the Secretariat has proposed the following payments and actions.

- **COVID 19**

The report was approved by the WG and therefore all the foreseen work has been successfully delivered. The full amount should be paid to Dr. Loraine Gray

- **Marine Litter**

The report was approved by the WG and therefore all the foreseen work has been successfully delivered. The full amount should be paid

AAC – EMPA Framework Agreement

AAC has a framework agreement and four specific agreements with EMPA for the delivery of four respective recommendations. These agreements are due on 31.10.21, but the actual project is only considered delivered when the foreseen recommendation is approved by the EXCOM. The Secretariat made the following suggestion per specific agreement:

- **Quality of Shellfish water renamed for the recommendation to coherence of zones in relation with shellfish farming**

The draft recommendation is approved by the WG2 and is pending the consultation/approval by the EXCOM. Considering the technical nature of the document, the Secretariat considered that 80% of the work has been delivered and suggested that AAC compensates the amount of **1.600€** out of the 2.000€ foreseen in the contract. The Secretariat also suggested renewing the contract for the finalisation of the work until March 2022 with a compensation of 400€, thus the remaining 20% of the current contract.

- **Norovirus - Possibility of setting up a predictive tool**

The draft recommendation is approved by the WG2 and is pending the consultation/approval by the EXCOM. Considering the technical nature of the document, the Secretariat considered that 80% of the work has been delivered and suggested that AAC compensates the amount of **3.200€** out of the 4.000€ foreseen in the contract. The Secretariat also suggested renewing the contract for the finalisation of the work until March 2022 with a compensation of 800€, thus the remaining 20% of the current contract.

- **Biodiversity loss and Emerging pathogens**

While the WG2 has acknowledged the good work done so far, the draft recommendation still needs some additional work and approval by the WG2 and the EXCOM. Therefore, the Secretariat considered that 60% of the work has been delivered and AAC should compensate the amount of **2.400€** out of the 4.000€ foreseen in the contract. The Secretariat also suggested renewing the contract for the finalisation of the work until the end of May 2022 with a compensation of 1.600€, thus the remaining 40% of the current contract.

- **Predators' management in shellfish farming: economic quantification of damage and compensation for losses**

Considering that the draft recommendation still needs some additional input and work as well as approval by the WG2 and EXCOM, the Secretariat considered that 50% of the work has been delivered and therefore AAC should compensate the amount of **2.000€** out of the 4.000€ foreseen in the contract. AAC suggested renewing the contract for the finalisation of the work until June 2022, with a compensation of 2.000€, thus the remaining 50%, of the current contract.

The EXCOM agreed with the assessment presented by the Secretariat, approved the respective proposed payments, and mandated the Secretariat to proceed accordingly.

JO highlighted that we should make sure to use the AAC available budget for external experts. Expert's support



can help jumpstart and we should do good use of such resources and asked WGs chair and co-chairs and especially of WG1 and WG3 While WG2 to take this is not consideration and further communicated to their respective group members and FG

6. Procedural issues

In compliance with the AAC by-laws and the Internal Rules, the proposals hereby are looking to provide clarity to current working practices and to improve AAC procedural efficiency and the quality of AAC recommendations.

1. Fast approval of draft documents when no comments are received in consultation phase

Currently, when a recommendation is drafted it is sent to the EXCOM. The EXCOM has two weeks to make comments. After this period of two weeks of comments, the EXCOM is given two weeks more to approve the recommendation. To improve procedural efficiency, it is proposed the following:

A recommendation is sent to the EXCOM. EXCOM has 2 weeks for comments. If there are no comments then the recommendation is considered approved. If there are comments then a consultation is initiated to reach agreement.

The proposal of the fast approval of draft documents when no comments are received in the consultation phase was approved by the EXCOM and the Secretariat was asked to put into practice. The new practice should be taken into consideration during any future revision of Internal Rules of Procedure.

The EXCOM members commented that due to the amount of information received daily, and that AAC should consider ways as well of improving communication efficiency and impact.

1. Proof-reading of drafts at the initial phases (FG level) instead at the end once adopted.

While AAC recommendations are mainly drafted in English, most AAC members are not native English speakers and this may result from spelling mistakes to expression misunderstandings. Currently, to ensure that AAC recommendations are published without spelling and other linguistic errors, each recommendation after being approved by the EXCOM is proofread by external editors. Nonetheless, sometimes at the early stage of a recommendation drafting, when the concept is defined, improper use of English language might lead to unnecessary misunderstandings and delays. Therefore, to improve the quality of the text from the very beginning, setting a good bases for the review of the documents by the members, it is proposed to proof-read drafts at the initial phases (FG level) instead at the end once adopted.

The proposal of proof-reading of drafts at the initial phases (FG level) instead at the end once adopted was approved by the EXCOM.

The members commented that wherever possible and especially for translation, AAC should ask for the service of translators with relevant technical expertise in the topics of AAC interest.

The EXCOM also discussed improving the structure of the recommendations to help readers navigate through the document and the scope of the recommendation.

7. Update on external meeting

- Conclusion of the F2F annual conference of the EC

JO informed about his participation as AAC Chair to the Farm to Fork (F2F) annual conference of the EC. and



thanked the EC and especially DG MARE for giving the opportunity to AAC of being part of this very important event and presenting AAC work.

EXCOM discussed the relation of EMFAF with F2F.

PC mentioned that in EMFAF whatever is not ineligible it can be funded. Therefore, AAC Members should address the respective national authorities for funding activities relevant to the F2F via the EMFAF.

8. AAC Members Recruitment

The Secretariat informed the EXCOM about the status of membership application and expressions of interest for membership.

ADICONSUM: EU Member State Italy has provided its approval / support to the ADICONSUM application and the application will be presented to the General Assembly at its next meeting on 10th February for approval.

International Seaweed Association (ISA): ISA has expressed interest to become members of AAC. The Secretariat is in discussion with ISA to understand organisation profile and eligibility to become AAC member.

The secretariat also referred to

AQUATIC LIFE INSTITUTE (ALI France): Pending approval / application support from EU Member State France. Secretariat is following up in regular intervals with the French Authorities

9. AAC change of office address and actions to update change in by-laws

The Secretariat informed the EXCOM that Alienor has changed offices and moved from Rue de l'industrie 11, 1000, Bruxelles to Rue de Montoyer 31, 1000 Bruxelles. The new offices, which are more spacious and modern are less than 100 meters away from the old ones. Due to this move, AAC should update accordingly the change to the by-laws, inform the Belgian authorities and publish the act. Considering that this move was due to Alienor decision to change offices, Alienor will assume all costs for the publication of the AAC change of address and actions for the updating stakeholder with relevant change.

The EXCOM acknowledged the change and mandated the Secretariat / Alienor to proceed to the necessary action to inform by-laws, Belgian authorities, and stakeholders about AAC address change.

10. Any other business

No other business was discussed

11. Conclusions and closing of the meeting

JO expressed his satisfaction for the nice and productive meeting. He summarised EXCOM discussion and decisions and mentioned that EXCOM:

- Recognized the need to improve members knowledge and participation in WGs activity and asked to assess FG working procedure, to allow WG members that are not participating in the FG, to join the debate
- Acknowledged Mentimeter usefulness and asked to be further used in similar live polling exercises.
- Asked to develop of a Strategic Guidelines checklist to follow up on AAC respective action



- Proceed with the payment of the experts and rapporteurs and the renewal of the contracts for the finalisation of the pending work
- Asked WG to make a good use of the AAC budget to hiring external experts.
- Introduce proofreading of draft recommendation at FG level
- Introduce fast approval of recommendations by EXCOM if no comments are received at the comments period.
- Proceed with the change of the AAC address

JO informed that the next ExCom meeting will take place virtually on the 10th of February 2022

