

Aquaculture Advisory Council

Executive Committee meeting

9th October 2020 (10:00-12:15)

Online meeting

Minutes

Attendants: **Javier Ojeda** (Chair), **Marc-Philip Buckhout** (Vice-Chair), **Marco Gilmozzi** (FEAP), **Catherine Pons** (FEAP), **Ole Christensen** (FEFAC), **Paul Denekamp** (Stichting Vissenbescherming), **Bruno Guillaumie** (EMPA), **Luisa Alvarez** (FEDEPESCA), **Douglas Waley** (Eurogroup for Animals), **Pier Antonio Salvador** (COPA), **Bernhard Feneis** (COGECA), **Giuseppe Prioli** (AMA), **Anne-Laure Prego-Cauchet** (CNC), **Phil Brooke** (CIWF), **Yannis Pelekanakis** (Federation of Greek Maricultures), **Andrea Fabris** (WG1 Chair), **Brian Thomsen** (WG3 Chair), **Cécile Fouquet** (AAC Secretariat), **Charlotte Musquar** (AAC Secretariat), **Pascale Colson** (DG MARE), **Mael Le Drast** (DG MARE)

Abbreviations: **FG** (Focus Group), **WG** (Working Groups), **OIG** (Other Interest Group), **EC** (European Commission), **MS** (Member States), **WP** (Work Programme)

1. Opening by the Chair

After a small introduction, **Javier Ojeda (Chair)** gave an overview of what has been accomplished by the AAC in the past year despite the context of the COVID crisis.

He noted that the evaluation questionnaires following each meeting have allowed to improve the AAC internal functioning and the organisation of online meetings.

2. Adoption of the agenda and approval of the last ExCom minutes (July 16, 2020)

- Adoption of the agenda

The agenda is adopted with no changes.

- Approval of the minutes

The minutes are adopted with no changes.

3. Working Groups: Updates

by the WG Chairs

- Working Group 1

Andrea Fabris (WG1 Chair) listed the main issues currently discussed in WG1 starting by underlining the success of the first AAC Online Seminar on Fish Welfare that took place on October 6 (70 participants, including 21 AAC members but also the EC, MS, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and scientific experts):

- Animal welfare (following the seminar, a first recommendation on Fish Welfare will be drafted as an analytic overview);
- Ecosystem Services (while this FG is piloted by WG2, Catalin Platon (ROMFISH) has been appointed leader of WG1 for issues relating to fish ponds and freshwater aquaculture);
- Animal health (the availability of medicines, the monitoring of the use of antibiotics and vaccines are being discussed as AMR issues. They are also working on the Animal Health Law.);
- The CITES and aquaculture (it has been agreed to organise a meeting with DG ENVI as well as to draft a recommendation);
- Organic aquaculture (application of the new rules: contradictions and overlaps in the light of F2F);
- Wildlife impact on aquaculture.

- Working Group 2

Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) listed the 3 main topics currently being discussed within WG2:

- Norovirus;
- Quality of shellfish water (a new recommendation is currently being worked on);
- Ecosystem services.

The Secretariat mentioned that the WG2 Chair Thierry Hélie wanted to inform the ExCom that the next FG on Ecosystem services will take place on October 19.

Following his request, the ExCom approved the payment of the first half of the WG2 Rapporteur contract for drafting the recommendation on the quality of shellfish waters this year. A new contract will be created for next year and the second half will be paid then.

- Working Group 3

Brian Thomsen (WG3 Chair) mentioned that DG MARE made a presentation on the EMFF during the last WG3 meeting and confirmed that the question of the budget is now up to the MS. WG3 will be following on that. He then recalled the ongoing FGs:

- COVID-19 (the ToR for the expert to evaluate the possible impact of COVID-19 has been agreed on and a final draft will be prepared);
- Food security (the draft should be approved at the next meeting);
- Marine litter (Brian Thomsen (WG3 Chair) will take the lead and the draft

- should be approved at the next meeting);
- Data collection (a recommendation will hopefully be approved by December);
- F2F (the recommendation is ready to be finalized and sent to the ExCom for final approval);
- Consumer information;
- Biodiversity strategy;
- Climate change (the draft should be approved during the next meeting);
- Seaweed (a first general recommendation will be approved);

The priorities for 2021 were also discussed and, with the help of the Secretariat, he will propose a draft to discuss in February.

4. Update on the activity of the Task Force on the definition of the AAC's stakeholder categories

Javier Ojeda (Chair) noted that unfortunately there seems to be still no consensus within the FG and expressed his disappointment on it.

Douglas Waley (Eurogroup for Animals) explained that there is no shared idea on what the objectives of the document are and that is why it cannot be sent to the EC as it is. The categories have been agreed on but there is disagreement on how some given examples would fit in them.

Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) requested from the ExCom a clear roadmap and proposed to write down a positive list of organisations belonging to the sector. For any organisation not fitting in that list, they would belong to the 'Other Interest' category. **Pier Antonio Salvador (COPA)** and **Luisa Alvarez (FEDEPESCA)** agreed that this is the most viable option. **Douglas Waley (Eurogroup for Animals)** pointed that this is not a new approach.

Javier Ojeda (Chair) recalled that WSI has only joined the AAC as an OIG member temporarily and that a solution needs to be reached. He therefore proposed to make a very simple list of types of organisations that could potentially join the AAC and then distribute them between the two categories. For those for which there is no agreement within the AAC, the EC will be asked for its opinion.

This proposal was approved by the ExCom.

5. Identifying a new AAC Vice-Chair

Javier Ojeda (Chair) recalled that the 1st AAC Vice-Chair position is vacant and that it needs to be filled by an OIG member.

Paul Denekamp (Stichting Vissenbescherming) mentioned that the time required to assume this position seems too much on top of his roles as Vice-Chair of WG2 and WG3. **Marc-Philip Buckhout (Vice-Chair)** also saw this

issue as linked to the one discussed under Point 8. As for the time needed to work on governance issues, he sees it as linked to AAC statutes and Rules of Procedure (RoP). Were they more detailed, less time would be spent in discussions. This is one of the recommendations that have been made by the OIGs to the EC: to have harmonized statutes and RoP between all the ACs.

Javier Ojeda (Chair) noted that the workload will not be as big as it used to be. He highlighted that the governance of the AAC seems to work quite well in the day-to-day work. **Douglas Waley (Eurogroup for Animals)** wanted to stress that, with most of the environmental organisations leaving, the AAC has crossed a dangerous line if it wants to continue to be considered as a multi-stakeholder body.

6. AAC Budget: update on ongoing financial year and closing of the accounts

The Secretariat gave an update on the ongoing budget.

Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) mentioned that he will be sending, as agreed, the invoices relating to the WG2 rapporteur contract. He also pointed that the AAC needs to remain careful of spending its whole budget as not to see it reduced by the EC later. He suggested to invest more in translation and interpretation as the meetings will remain virtual for some time.

7. Inter-AC secretariat meeting

The Secretariat provided feedback on the regular Inter-AC secretariat meetings and more specifically regarding the organisation of virtual meetings.

Javier Ojeda (Chair) recalled that DG MARE's new Director-General, Charlina Vitcheva, offered the AAC to hold meetings with Christos Economou (Director) or with Felix Leinemann (Head of Unit). He requested the approval of the ExCom to organise such meetings.

Pier Antonio Salvador (COPA) requested that the agenda and the minutes of these meetings are shared with the members.

This proposal was approved by the ExCom.

8. How to attract new member organizations into the AAC

Javier Ojeda (Chair) highlighted the good work of the Secretariat to ensure that each member's opinion is heard and considered. He regrets the departure of Seas at Risk and asked them to reconsider, as he acknowledges that the AAC recommendations will lose value without their input.

Marc-Philip Buckhout (Vice-Chair) explained that the letter sent by NGOs to the EC was not related to any particular AC but was aimed at general structural problems relating to ACs. NGOs are leaving the ACs due to issues relating to governance, even discrimination in some instances. Another issue is linked to budget and limited funding that needs to be justified to the contributors while there is not much concrete results to show up for.

Douglas Waley (Eurogroup for Animals) regretted that budgetary reasons were put forward by NGOs instead of stating the real reasons. He proposed to organise a seminar with non-member NGOs to present the AAC work.

Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) added that there are good relations between sector organisations and NGOs at the local level and suggested that the reasons why they do not join the AAC are a lack of time, membership fee deemed too high and the language issue. He therefore suggested to lower the fees, translate the documents and produce a leaflet in several languages. **Javier Ojeda (Chair)** recalled that the AAC already has a leaflet but that it could be improved and translated. The language issue relates only to the working documents, as the AAC recommendations are already translated. As for the fee, if it is an issue it needs to be discussed.

Javier Ojeda (Chair) wondered why the governance of the AAC seems to be problematic regarding environmental issues but not on animal welfare issues.

Douglas Waley (Eurogroup for Animals) pointed out that they too have some issues as well. However, environmental and animal welfare organisations are in different positions, environmental organisations have, for instance, a much longer story of engagement with aquaculture.

Marco Gilmozzi (FEAP) wanted to highlight the overall positive impact of the AAC work, including on his own practices regarding stunning. He recalled that there were already differences between NGOs and sector organisations at the beginning of the AAC and said that he believes that a solution can be reached together. **Paul Denekamp (Stichting Vissenbescherming)** added that he is glad that there is an open-minded discussion on animal welfare. **Bernhard Feneis (COGECA)** underlined the undemocratic construction of the ACs. The relation between what the AAC produces and communicates to the EC and MS is really small compared to the amount of work it requires.

Javier Ojeda (Chair) called again for Seas at Risk and Birdlife to reconsider their leaving the AAC. In the meantime, the AAC will work on the suggestions put forward during the discussion.

Luisa Alvarez (FEDEPESCA) suggested that a whole meeting, without a time limit, should be devoted to this issue. **Bernhard Feneis (COGECA)** agreed. **Javier Ojeda (Chair)** linked the issue with the stakeholders definitions' discussion and added that the Secretariat and himself will get back to the ExCom to organise this.

Pascale Colson (DG MARE) approved Douglas Waley's idea of a seminar with NGOs. She also suggested, following Luisa Alvarez' suggestion, to include all ACs to discuss this during half a day as the problem goes beyond a simple definition issue. She also recalled that an Inter-AC meeting will take place on November 25 and that this topic will be discussed. She also wanted to stress that it is important to contact the EC via the AC secretariats to remain transparent. The EC will privilege ACs over relationship with specific actors. She thanked Marc-Philip Buckhout for his good work for the AAC.

9. Date of the forthcoming meeting

The next ExCom meeting will take place on the 4th of February 2021.