

Aquaculture Advisory Council

Executive Committee meeting

4th February 2021 (10:00-12:15)
Online meeting

Minutes

Attendants: **Javier Ojeda** (Chair), **Paul Denekamp** (Vice-Chair), **Catherine Pons** (FEAP), **Ole Christensen** (FEFAC), **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), **Thierry H lie** (WG2 Chair), **C cile Fouquet** (AAC Secretariat), **Charlotte Musquar** (AAC Secretariat), **Pascale Colson** (DG MARE), **Mael Le Drast** (DG MARE)

Excused: Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA)

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

Javier Ojeda (Chair) thanked Mrs Julia Rubeck (DG MARE) for her work during the past years and hoped that her new colleagues will continue her good work with the AAC.

He also informed the members about the 34th Session of the Committee on Fisheries of FAO that would take place the following week and noted that it is important for the AAC to follow the conclusions of such meetings.

2. Adoption of the agenda and approval of the last ExCom minutes (October 09, 2021)

- Adoption of the agenda

Point 7 was moved just after point 4.

A last-minute issue about an interview with Euronews to be discussed under the 'AOB' was added.

The agenda was adopted with these changes.

- Approval of the minutes

The minutes were 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:

- Ecosystem Services: the FG will continue its work;
- CITES application: the presentation by DG ENVI was not really satisfactory but the WG1 will move forward regardless and draft a recommendation in view of the next meeting;
- Fish Welfare: there are a lot of issues to discuss, so the first step will be prioritizing. An external expert will be hired to work impartially on sorting the issues that have been discussed within WG1;
- Fish Health: WG1 will continue to follow up on veterinary medicine products, as this is an important issue. Regarding Animal Health Law, WG1 will follow its implementation process and discuss the problems linked to it;
- Wildlife impact on aquaculture: WG1 committed to give an input on the matter.

During the next meeting, WG1 will discuss new priorities to work on.

Yannis Pelekanakis (Federation of Greek Maricultures) wondered about the new EP Animal Transport Committee (ANIT Committee) and how the AAC could intervene in its 2021 work program. **Andrea Fabris (WG1 Chair)** suggested this could be discussed at the next WG1 meeting.

- Working Group 2

Thierry Hélie (WG2 Chair) listed the 2 main topics currently being discussed within WG2:

- Quality of shellfish water: the work should be concluded in June;
- Ecosystem services: a few more comments have been made on the draft and there will be a new FG meeting organised to finalise the document.

New priorities have also been agreed on:

- Norovirus (predictive perspective);
- Emerging pathogens;
- Predators and economic quantification of damage and compensation for losses;
- Land-sea link (recommendation to be produced in 2022).

Each of these topics' recommendations will include a paragraph about communication activities, as requested by the EC.

He also mentioned a request by former AAC member **Shellfish Association of Great Britain** for the AAC to produce a letter for the EC regarding the export of UK non-purified shellfish products into the EU market. **Wouter van Zandbrink (AIPCE)** offered to draft the letter.

- Working Group 3

Paul Denekamp (as WG3 Vice-Chair) listed the different topics discussed in WG3:

- A presentation was made by DG MARE on the new EMFAF;
- The following draft recommendations and ToR were approved: seaweed, food security, COVID-19 ToR, data collection, consumer information, climate footprint and marine litter. They will be consolidated before being sent to the ExCom for approval;
- On the Biodiversity Strategy and Farm to Fork drafts, dissenting opinions remained and it will be necessary to continue the discussion;
- A representative from DG FISMA gave a presentation on the Taxonomy Regulation;
- WG3 agreed on the 2021 priorities and some members have already volunteered for the new FG.

4. Improving the functioning of ACs

Javier Ojeda (Chair) informed the ExCom that the Inter-AC meeting that took place on the 18th of January 2021 was a good opportunity to discuss with the EC and other ACs about the functioning of ACs and to share experiences:

- Charlina Vitcheva (Director General of DG MARE) highlighted the relevance of the ACs and the value of their recommendations;
- DG MARE is planning to amend the current Delegated Act on the functioning of the ACs and called for more frequent Inter-AC meetings;
- DG MARE will organise an event on the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

The Chair went through the different suggestions made during the meeting to improve the functioning of the ACs:

- Evaluation of the functioning of the ACs: two ACs carried out external evaluations. The AAC currently produces quality internal evaluations, in his opinion, but external ones remain a possibility.
- Having all opinions heard: no specific request by the AAC.
- Status and rules of procedure: because of strong differences between members, it has been difficult to update them in the past. However, continuing with this work remains a possibility.
- Weighing of the votes: this would not be a possibility under the current CFP rules according to the EC.
- Impartiality of Chairs and Secretariat: several options were presented for the Chair: rotation, fixed terms, limited number of years, etc. The possibility to have an Honorary Chair (no affiliation to any of the members, like was the case in the beginning of the AAC) was also put forward.
- Engagement in the ACs: participation in an AC implies time and money and resources will be put in the ACs only if they can have a real impact.
- Remuneration of the Chairs: this is done in some ACs but is, in his opinion, counterproductive.
- It has been suggested that AC Recommendations should have more impact in consultations than individual opinions.
- A strengthened relation between ACs and EC: it has been suggested to create a common working calendar.

The Chair also announced that he will not stand for re-election as Chair of the AAC.

Pascale Colson (DG MARE) agreed that this was a very productive meeting and confirmed that there will be more Inter-AC meetings in the future, with the next one around Easter. An event will also be organised around Brexit, as well as some trainings for the ACs Chairs and Secretariats.

Bernhard Feneis (COGECA) thanked Javier Ojeda for his committed work as Chair and pleaded in favour of remunerating the Chair, arguing that it could create another kind of relationship between him/her and the members. He also noted that he would like to see more MEPs attending the AAC meetings. **Javier Ojeda (Chair)** recalled that the AAC has two MEP referents in the PECH Committee of the European Parliament. On the topic of participation in the AAC costs, **Thierry Hélié (WG2 Chair)** added that it could bring to the AAC smaller structures that could not have afforded to participate otherwise.

Douglas Waley (Eurogroup for Animals) expressed his support for Javier Ojeda's work as Chair and hoped for a greater diversity of the OIG in the AAC. He wondered what the EC is doing to improve this aspect.

Thierry Hélié (WG2 Chair) suggested to have a training for new AAC members, for instance on EU law. **Javier Ojeda (Chair)** approved and suggested to do it internally via the Secretariat. **Thierry Hélié** also proposed to invite the Chair of the EP PECH Committee to the June WG meetings.

Pascale Colson (DG MARE) mentioned that DG MARE is indeed working on the delegated act on the functioning of the ACs' amendments and that they have gotten quite far with this work. There still needs to be checks. Therefore, she cannot say much about it. The purpose of this revision is to take into account the suggestions made by the ACs.

She reminded that MEPs can be observers to AC meetings and argued that although it is always good to have the PECH Committee Chair sitting at a meeting, inviting MEPs with good technical knowledge can also be an asset.

5. Annual evaluation questionnaire for the Secretariat and the AAC's work

The Secretariat presented the results of the Annual evaluation questionnaire for the year 2019-2020.

Pascale Colson (DGMARE), commenting on one of the remarks from the members, asked what is meant by "relevant" EC representatives. **The Secretariat** explained that what is meant is "EC representatives with a relevant technical knowledge".

6. AAC Budget: update on ongoing financial year

The Secretariat presented an update on the budget of the ongoing financial year.

Thierry Hélié (WG2 Chair) requested an additional 2000 € for WG2 budget, as the full budget for the Rapporteur has not been paid during the previous year and the work will be finalised this year.

This request was approved.

Douglas Waley (Eurogroup for Animals) suggested that money saved traveling should be spent on external experts. **Giuseppe Prioli (AMA)** added that it could be done at the FG level. **Pascale Colson (DG MARE)**, **Thierry Hélié (WG2 Chair)** and **Phil Brooke (CIWF)** agreed. **Phil Brooke** added that, for the sake of transparency, it would be good to take minutes of the FG meetings. Budget could be allowed on the additional time needed by the Secretariat.

Bernhard Feneis (COGECA) wondered how to choose the experts and **Javier Ojeda (Chair)** answered the choice relies on the WGs.

Bernhard Feneis also requested the translation of AAC Recommendations in German and **the Secretariat** recalled that all AAC Recommendations are automatically translated in German.

Pascale Colson (DG MARE) pointed that interpretation and translation should be the first items in which budget should be used.

Javier Ojeda (Chair) added that the virtual meetings' training has been very useful and that budget should continue to be used for this.

7. How to attract new member organizations into the AAC

The Secretariat has mapped consumer and algae associations before contacting them by e-mail. Two meetings occurred, with **ALGApplus** and **ADICONSUM**. ADICONSUM, a consumer association from Italy, knew the AAC through FAI CISL. Their interest has also been discussed with Andrea Fabris (API). The person in contact with the Secretariat from ALGApplus is **Helena Abreu**, who attended the WG3 meeting and seemed very enthusiastic. A good contact has also been established with **EABA** through **Olavur Gregersen**, who also attended the WG3 meeting.

Paul Denekamp (Vice-Chair) requested that environmental associations are also contacted to join the AAC. **The Secretariat will proceed with this request.**

Yannis Pelekanakis (Federation of Greek Maricultures) noted that more variety is needed among the NGOs members of the AAC and suggested to chart

what is missing today. **Javier Ojeada (Chair)** approved. **Phil Brooke (CIWF)** pointed that what is preventing more NGOs to take part in the AAC is cost and time. He also noted that having virtual meetings can save both and therefore encourage participation. **Giuseppe Prioli (AMA)** added that what matters in attracting new members is being able to show that our Recommendations have a true influence on DG MARE's political.

Pier Antonio Salvador (COPA) suggested to invite the current AAC members' associates to the AAC online meetings as observers, for them to witness how our time is used.

Pascale Colson (DG MARE) added that reaching to the MS could also be a good idea. She explained that this has been done, for instance, by the MAC in order to explain the role of ACs and show the MS how it could be interesting for their national associations to join. **The Secretariat will proceed to contacting the MS in this regard.**

8. Any other business

Javier Ojeda (Chair) explained that the AAC has been contacted to do an interview with Euronews and suggested some answers to the questions received from the journalist.

Thierry Hélie (WG2 Chair) suggested to insist on the cultural and gastronomical aspects of aquaculture products in the EU.

Paul Denekamp (Vice-Chair) and **Phil Brooke (CIWF)** suggested to mention that topics such animal welfare and the environment were also discussed within the AAC.

Giuseppe Prioli (AMA) suggested that, instead of talking of the impact of aquaculture on the environment, the Chair should concentrate on the ecosystem services rendered and the importance of having clean water.

Bernhard Feneis (COGECA) wondered what will happen with the answers provided by the AAC. **Javier Ojeda (Chair)** explained that a video will be produced by Euronews. Several members noted that journalists tend to interpret answers and do not always convey the desired message.

9. Conclusions and closing of the meeting

The next ExCom meeting will take place on the 20th of July 2021.