

WORK PROGRAMME FOR AAC

Period: [01/11/2023] to [31/10/2024]

Background (legislative framework, number of years of functioning, number of members in the General Assembly and in the Executive Committee, composition of the Executive Committee, performance review carried on or scheduled on, etc...)

Advisory Councils are bodies of EU interest, created by the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013.

The Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC) was created in 2016. The AAC Recommendations include the opinions of its 50 stakeholder members represented in the EXCOM with the following repartition:

- 60% - Sector organisations (Aquaculture producers, Feed, Veterinarians, Trade Unions...)
- 40% - Other Interest Group (Environment, Consumers, Animal Welfare organisations ...)

There are 20 seats in the ExCom. Currently, there are 5 empty seats belonging to the OIG stakeholders.

The AAC's General Assembly and Executive Committee are guided by the advice generated by our three working groups on Finfish, Shellfish and Horizontal issues. The members always seek for a consensus in the preparation of the AAC papers. In the rare cases in which a consensus could not be found, a dissenting opinion is included in the recommendation.

A performance review will be carried out this year (2023-2024).

Mission and objectives of the AAC

The Aquaculture Advisory Council provides advice to the European Commission and the EU Member States on any measure that affects aquaculture.

AAC WORK PRIORITIES

Overarching long term and short term work priorities

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

The Aquaculture AC has been given some specific tasks by the European Commission in the implementation of the Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030.

To fulfil these obligations, the AAC plans in 2023-2024:

- To provide input to the DG MARE Aquaculture unit whenever requested at different stages of the preparation of the Guidance Documents foreseen for the implementation of the Strategic Guidelines;
- To continue its participation (via a designated representative) in the Task Force for the preparation of the EU-wide DG MARE communication campaign on aquaculture. The AAC will support and ensure the broad dissemination by members of this campaign;

- To constantly aim at improving the dissemination of information towards the EU aquaculture stakeholders, such as Good practices and Guidance.

II. Resilience/competitiveness of EU aquaculture

- COVID-19
- Food safety and food security
- National Strategic Plans
- Simplification of Administrative Procedures
- Enhancing competitiveness of European Aquaculture
 - o Sustainability of Feeds and feed ingredients used in Europe as a differentiation aspect;
 - o Consumer issues, including communication to consumers, e.g.: ecolabels;
 - o Administrative issues, including licensing and insurance.
- Level Playing Field
- Maritime Spatial Planning
- Aquaculture production and management systems
 - o Organic aquaculture;
 - o Supply of seed and fingerlings;
 - o Algae and other lower-trophic species such as shellfish, herbivore and omnivore fish and other invertebrates;
 - o New cultivation technologies.
- Blue growth, blue bioeconomy
 - o Implementation of the Algae Strategy.
- Food security
- Food Safety
- Climate change
- EMFAF

Aquatic Animal Health and Welfare

- Availability of veterinary medicines, and biocides in light of the new EU regulations on VMPs and medicated Feed
- Norovirus and emerging risks
- Medicated feed
- Fish parasites
- 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 aquatic animals welfare and production through a better understanding of their behaviour and ethology:
 - o Rearing and environments
 - o Live aquatic animals transport
 - o Stunning and Slaughter
 - o Behavioural and Operational Welfare Indicators

- Collecting data on important welfare aspects of aquaculture
 - Reproduction and genetics
- III. Green transition
- Environmental issues and sustainability concerns
 - Green Deal
 - Zero Pollution agenda
 - Nature Restoration law and EU Nature Directives
 - Water Framework Directive and water protection regulations for molluscs breeding
 - Marine Strategy Framework Directive
 - Sustainability of feeds and feed ingredients
 - Climate change
 - Predators
 - Biodiversity
 - Alien species
 - Sustainable nutrients management plan
 - Valuation of the ecosystem services provided by aquaculture
 - Marine litter
 - Impact on wild fish: - sea lice, genetic contamination (escapees), etc.
- IV. Social acceptance/consumer information
- V. Knowledge/innovation

Work priorities identified for each Working Group and Focus Group (where available)

Working Group 1 (finfish):

The Working Group priorities are reflected by the existing Focus groups:

- Medicated feed
- Fish welfare
- Fish health management
- Domestication
- Octopus farming
- Eels

On top of that, the Working Group will be working on the domestication of new fish species, microbioma, and on responses to Commission consultations on fish welfare (rearing, slaughter and transport).

Working Group 2 (shellfish):

The Working Group priorities are reflected by the existing Focus groups:

- Shellfish health
- Molluscan welfare
- Bottom shellfish farming in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)
- Environmental Liability Directive - Polluter Pays Principle

On top of that, the Working Group will be reflecting on the need to create a stem cell bank and multiplier centers to develop algae aquaculture and the inventory of good environmental practices of the shellfish sector.

Working Group 3 (horizontal matters):

DG MARE has presented to us its “aquaculture priorities” for next year, which in turn will become AAC’s Horizontal Matters’ group priorities:

- Integration of the aquaculture sector in local communities
- Data collection
- Energy transition
- Guidance on environmental performance
- Ecosystem services of aquaculture
- Aquaculture and nature restoration
- Communication campaign

The Working Group’s other priorities are reflected by the existing Focus groups:

- People information at HORECA level
- Research prioritization
- Industrial Emissions Regulation

On top of that, the Working Group will be working on the sustainable use of nutrients and follow up the implementation of the Guidance Documents by the Member States.

Other issues of interest if any:

The AAC secretariat attends the meetings of the Market AC as an observer to update the members on its activities.

The AAC works hand in hand with the Aquaculture Assistance Mechanism to disseminate its surveys and calls for information, and provide feedback as often as necessary on its drafts and instruments.

The AAC has launched a dialogue with EU4Algae and with EIFFAC in view of collaborating on any matters of common interest in the future.

The developments concerning Brexit and the involvement of ACs in the Consultation Processes between the UK and the European Commission are also followed up for information.

Planned recommendations for year 2023-2024:

No	Issue/subject	Link with the CFP	WG/FG at the origin of the recommendation	Planned date of adoption (if available)

1	Use of DG MARE mapping studies for the development of low-trophic aquaculture	Strategic Guidelines	WG2	
2	Preserve our sovereignty in terms of hatcheries and develop a "pathogen free" label to allow secure exports	Strategic Guidelines	WG2	
4	Priorities for the new Fish Welfare Reference Center	Strategic Guidelines	WG1	
5	Priorities for new calls for research in aquaculture	Strategic Guidelines	WG3	
6	Aquaculture of eels	Eels fisheries management	WG1	
7	Marine Strategy Framework Directive	Strategic Guidelines	WG3	
8	Consumer information	Strategic Guidelines	WG3	

Planned participation to Commission public consultations

Topic/subject	Link with the CFP	Deadline for the EU Survey (if available)	Planned date for adoption (if available)

AAC planning of meetings

AAC PLANNING OF MEETINGS (from Nov 2023 to Oct 2024)

No	Date (for the first 6 months, please provide precise dates)	Topics /subjects of meeting	Type of meeting (physical/planned/hybrid)	European Commission participation requested (yes/no)	If Commission participation requested, specific issues to be dealt with	Priority for a Commission participation (from 1 to 4) (1= highest priority)
	05/12/2023	ExCom	Online	No	N/A	4
	30/01/2024	WG1 - Finfish	Online	Yes	TBD	1
	31/01/2024	ExCom	Online	No	N/A	4

	20/02/2024	Extraordinary GA	Online	No	N/A	4
	20/02/2024	WG3 – Horizontal Issues	Online	Yes	DG MARE updates by the Aquaculture team Other topics tbd	1
	21/02/2024	WG2 - Shellfish	Online	Yes	TBD	1
	11/06/2024	WG2 - Shellfish	Physical (Brussels)	Yes	TBD	1
	11/06/2024 - 12/06/2024	WG3 – Horizontal Issues	Physical (Brussels)	Yes	DG MARE updates by the Aquaculture team Other topics tbd	1
	12/06/2024	WG1 - Finfish	Physical (Brussels)	Yes	TBD	1
	02/07/2024	ExCom	Online	No	N/A	4
	24/09/2024	GA	Online	No	N/A	4
	15/10/2024	WG1 - Finfish	Physical (Brussels)	Yes	TBD	1
	15/10/2024 - 16/10/2024	WG3 – Horizontal Issues	Physical (Brussels)	Yes	DG MARE updates by the Aquaculture team Other topics tbd	1
	16/10/2024	WG2 - Shellfish	Physical (Brussels)	Yes	TBD	1
	29/10/2024	ExCom	Online	No	N/A	4