

AAC STRATEGIC PLAN

Period: [01/11/2024] to [31/10/2025]

Background

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 Executive Committee (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 ExCom 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.

An independent performance review was carried out in 2023. The ExCom is implementing the resulting action plan.

This Strategic Plan is prepared by the ExCom and adopted by the General Assembly in compliance with the provisions in the Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2022/204 of 8 December 2021.

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 2024-2025:

- 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 constantly aim at improving the dissemination of information towards the EU aquaculture stakeholders, such as Good practices and Guidance.
- To disseminate among Members the EU Aquaculture website and invite them to join as registered users. To propose, where relevant, information to be included in the Knowledge base of this website.

- Support the work on the mid-term assessment of the implementation of the Strategic Guidelines due in 2025.
- To contribute to studies ongoing or planned (e.g. study on the assessment of environmental benefits of aquaculture and future study on feed).

II. Resilience/competitiveness of EU aquaculture

- Food safety and food security
- 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;
- Level Playing Field
- Spatial Planning for marine and inland aquaculture
- Aquaculture production and management systems
 - o Organic aquaculture;
 - o Supply of seed and fingerlings;
 - o Low trophic and low environmental impact aquaculture species including algae, shellfish and herbivore and omnivore fish, as well as IMTA and offshore conditions
- Blue growth, blue bioeconomy
 - o Implementation of the Algae Strategy.
 - o Local installation supports
- 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
 - o Collecting data on important welfare aspects of aquaculture
- Reproduction and genetics

III. Green transition

- Environmental issues and sustainability concerns
 - o Green Deal
 - o Zero Pollution agenda
 - o Nature Restoration law and EU Nature Directives
 - o Water Framework Directive and water protection regulations for molluscs breeding
 - o Marine Strategy Framework Directive
 - o Sustainability of feeds and feed ingredients
 - o Predators
 - o Biodiversity
 - o Invasive species
 - o Valuation of the ecosystem services provided by aquaculture
 - o Marine litter
 - o 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:

- Medicated feed and Veterinary Medicine Products in aquaculture
- Fish welfare
- Fish health management
- Domestication
- Octopus farming
- Sturgeon
- Valorisation of fish waste
- Microbiome in water and climate change
- Levels of industrial contaminants in seafood

Working Group 2 (shellfish):

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

- Shellfish health
- Molluscan welfare
- Good Environmental Practices in Low trophic Aquaculture Farming
- Nature based solutions for Low Trophic and multitrophic Aquaculture: Ecosystem Services and Stock Restoration
- Water quality depending on the depth
- Levels of industrial contaminants in seafood

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:

- Guidance on environmental performance
- Guidance on predators
- Guidance on environmental benefits of aquaculture
- Study on fish feed
- Code of conduct on animal welfare and welfare indicators
- Good practices on the integration of the aquaculture sector in local communities
- Communication campaign

The Working Group’s other priorities are:

- Industrial Emissions Regulation
- Organic regulation
- Algae
- Youth in aquaculture
- Marine Strategy Framework Directive
- Plastic litter (state of play)

Implementation of the EMFAF and use of other EU funding schemes relevant to aquaculture. On top of that, the Working Group will follow up the implementation of the Guidance Documents by the Member States.

During the next year, work will proceed concerning the development of the 10th Framework Programme (FP10), the successor to the Horizon Europe Research Framework. This will be alongside the continuing development of the European Partnerships. AAC will consider recommendations concerning research and innovation priorities at the EU and MS level. 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.

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 is an observer of the MAC’s Focus Group on the PEFCE and will contribute to the upcoming MAC recommendations on this matter. The AAC also follows the MAC’s work on labelling and level-playing field matters with interest.

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

The AAC is a member of the EU Communication Campaign on Aquaculture’s Task Force.

The AAC has been granted the status of Permanent Observer of the Agri-Food Chain Observatory (AFCE).

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

Planned recommendations for year 2024-2025:

No	Issue/subject	Link with the CFP	WG/FG at the origin of the recommendation	Planned date of adoption (if available)
1	Framing new EC financial tools to support Good Husbandry Practices for shellfish farming (waste, recognition of ecosystem services, restoration projects)	Strategic Guidelines	WG2	October 2025
2	Research & Innovation Priorities (including Dissemination, Communication and Exploitation)	Strategic Guidelines	WG3	October 2025
3	Blue Crab	Strategic Guidelines	WG2	October 2025
4	Aquaculture sturgeon and CITES	Strategic Guidelines	WG1	October 2025
5	Industrial contaminant levels in fish and climate change	Strategic Guidelines	WG1	October 2025
6	The place of aquaculture in an EU Food Strategy	Strategic Guidelines	WG3	October 2025
7	Use of satellite data for aquaculture	Strategic Guidelines	WG3	October 2025
8	Mid-term evaluation of the new EU Strategic Guidelines implementation	Strategic Guidelines	WG3	October 2025

Planned participation to Commission public/stakeholders' consultations

Topic/subject	Link with the CFP	Deadline for the EU Survey (if available)	Planned date for adoption (if available)
CFP Evaluation	CFP Regulation	End of 2024 (TBC)	

AAC planning of meetings

AAC PLANNING OF MEETINGS (from Nov 2024 to Oct 2025)

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)
	28/01/2025	ExCom	Online	No	N/A	4
	04/02/2025	WG2 - Shellfish	Online	Yes	TBD	1
	18/02/2025	WG1 - Finfish	Online	Yes	TBD	1
	19/02/2025	Extraordinary GA	Online	No	N/A	4
	19/02/2025	WG3 – Horizontal Issues	Online	Yes	DG MARE updates by the Aquaculture team Other topics tbd	1
	08/04/2025	ExCom	Online	No	N/A	4
	03/06/2025	WG2 - Shellfish	Physical (Brussels)	Yes	TBD	1
	03/06/2025 - 04/06/2025	WG3 – Horizontal Issues	Physical (Brussels)	Yes	DG MARE updates by the Aquaculture team Other topics tbd	1
	04/06/2025	WG1 - Finfish	Physical (Brussels)	Yes	TBD	1
	24/06/2025	ExCom	Online	No	N/A	4
	16/09/2025	GA	Online	No	N/A	4
	14/10/2025	WG1 - Finfish	Physical (Brussels)	Yes	TBD	1
	14/10/2025 - 15/10/2025	WG3 – Horizontal Issues	Physical (Brussels)	Yes	DG MARE updates by the Aquaculture team Other topics tbd	1
	15/10/2025	WG2 - Shellfish	Physical (Brussels)	Yes	TBD	1
	28/10/2025	ExCom	Online	No	N/A	4