

Aquaculture Advisory Council

WG2 Shellfish Meeting

16 October 2024 (13:00 - 17:00)

Thon Hotel EU – Rue de la Loi 75 – 1000 Brussels – Interpretation available in EN - FR - ES - IT

Minutes

PARTICIPATION LIST

WG2 MEMBERS

Stéphane Angeri (SENC, Chair)

Paul Denekamp (Stichting Vissenbescherming, Vice-Chair)

Lorenzo Gennari (AMA),

Andrea Fabris (API),

Phil Brooke (CIWF),

Audrey Lainé (CNC),

Thibaut Pivetta (EMPA),

Florian Guillou (CNPMEM),

Angeles Longa Portabales (Consello Regulador do Mexillon de Galicia),

David Basset (EATIP),

Teresa Morrissey (IFA),

Antonio Correia (APA),

Addy Risseeuw (PO Mosselcultuur),

Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISH),

Stefan Meyer (BVF),

Hein Sas (NORA).

Excused: Wouter van Zandbrink (CEP), Philippe Le Gal (CRC Bretagne-Sud)

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Observers: Joe Redfern (SAGB), Valentin Rosca (Moldovan Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry), Dumitru Cocieru (Moldovan Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry), Viorica Turcanu (Moldovan Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry), Vasile Capatina (Moldovan Bureau for European Integration), Lone Flyvholm (Norwegian Seafood Federation – FEAP).

Member States Experts: Julián García Baena (Spanish Ministry for Agriculture – General Secretariat of Fisheries), Maria Vittoria Briscolini (Italian Ministry for Agriculture), Ilaria Gerraro (Italian Ministry for Agriculture), Irene Adelaide Forcella (Italian Ministry of Agriculture), Magdalena Tenciu (Romanian Institute for Aquaculture, Rui Oliveira (Portuguese Directorate-General for Natural Resources, Safety and Maritime Services).

Secretariat: Cynthia Benites (AAC Secretariat), Cécile Fouquet (AAC Secretariat), Charlotte Musquar (AAC Secretariat), Justine Marrot (AAC Secretariat).



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MEETING MINUTES

Welcome by Chair Stéphane Angeri

Stéphane Angeri (Chair) welcomed the participants as well as the secretariat and interpreters.

1. Adoption of the agenda and minutes of the last meeting

The order of the points was changed. After Point 2, Point 4 will be discussed, followed by Point 3 and Point 5.
The agenda was approved with these changes.

The minutes of the last meeting were approved by written procedure.

2. Food safety: arsenic levels

- Exchange of information on the latest news
- Exchange of views with the Working Group members and decision on next steps

Andrea Fabris (API, WG1 Chair) shared what had been discussed regarding industrial contaminants in fish and climate change in WG1.



Stefan Meyer (BVF) noted that in August this year, EFSA published the first assessment on small organic contaminants, mostly initiated by Spanish authorities. **Thibault Pivetta (EMPA)** said that the approach of studying these contaminants by species is crucial and seems aligned with current needs. There is increasing pressure on threshold levels for contaminants for shellfish. There is expertise in this area of environmental contamination from both land and sea. These contaminants have significant health and zoonotic impacts; they can also affect behavior and health at different levels.

A joint Focus Group with WG1 will be created on industrial contaminants.

4. Norovirus

- Exchange of information on the latest news
- Exchange of views with the Working Group members and decision on next steps

The Chair mentioned that the recommendation was sent to the European Commission, but no response has been received yet. This is concerning, especially as the sector prepares for the end of the year, a high-risk period.

Audrey Lainé (CNC) updated the members on the Oxyvir programme and the implementation of the Oxyvir observatory. More results will be shared at the next WG2 meeting.

Addy Risseeuw (PO Mosselcultuur) mentioned that **Wouter van Zandbrink (CEP)** is excused. He emphasized the importance of keeping in touch with the French authorities, as the Netherlands are also very alert on this issue. **Teresa Morrissey (IFA)** explained that there was a high outbreak during the summer at an oyster farm in Ireland, which had never happened before at this level. They discovered what they believe is a new, much more infectious mutation of the norovirus. The source is unknown, although it is typically land-based, similar to what happens in France near sewage areas close to oyster farms. In terms of illness in people consuming the shellfish, there was one shellfish-related incident, but high levels of norovirus were observed in general, not necessarily related to shellfish. Public authorities provided weekly reports on norovirus levels in the population.

Stefan Meyer (BVF) mentioned the issue of tracing the source, as EFSA is trying to use genomics for this purpose. **Audrey Lainé (CNC)** mentioned that norovirus genogroups and genotypes can be analysed to determine if they are of human or animal origin. She suggested retrieving stool samples from sick individuals to analyse the genogroup and genotype to confirm the correlation between contaminated shellfish and sick people. **Teresa Morrissey (IFA)** stated that Ireland has not yet conducted such detailed analyses.

Angeles Longa Portabales (Consello Regulador do Mexillon de Galicia) proposed thinking about best practices that could be implemented, possibly a protocol like in France that directly links the genotype to an outbreak. **Audrey Lainé (CNC)** agreed that it might be a good idea, although she is unsure how it works in other Member States. More in-depth analyses of genogroups and genotypes are requested in France; she is unsure if it would be useful in other Member States if they are not organised. **The Chair** mentioned that having a Europe-wide protocol to manage this risk would be very pertinent and intelligent.

The members will wait for the reply from the European Commission to take further steps.

3. Shellfish health: worrying impact of climate change on EU mussels' production level

- Presentation by **Lorenzo Gennari (AMA)** and **Audrey Lainé (CNC)**



- Exchange of views with the Working Group members and decision on next steps

The Chair mentioned that **Lorenzo Gennari (AMA)** raised concerns over mussel production in the Mediterranean, suggesting the creation of a Focus Group on the subject. **Lorenzo Gennari (AMA)** mentioned that it was decided to draft a recommendation in 2024/2025, even though it is not in the strategic plan. He presented the key elements of the problem, which is significant, affecting the whole production in Italy and similarly in Spain with historical low production levels in 2023.

Angeles Longa Portabales (Consello Regulador do Mexillon de Galicia) stated that the problems in Spain also include freshwater influxes from heavy rains, which have killed juveniles. **Thibault Pivetta (EMPA)** supported the need for accessible tools like those provided by Copernicus, suggesting they participate in the FG. **David Bassett (EATiP)** emphasized the need to demonstrate economic impact for funding and support. **Teresa Morrissey (IFA)** mentioned similar problems in Ireland, with ongoing discussions for EMFAF support. Data collection is crucial but challenging. **Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISH)** mentioned a similar issue in their region led to production halts due to high temperatures and rain three years ago. **Thibault Pivetta (EMPA)** emphasized the difficulty proving the impact of multiple factors on production due to lack of data. New tools could facilitate real-time data collection and help set research priorities. **Addy Risseeuw (PO Mosselcultuur)** noted significant production decreases in 2024, with up to 80% losses in some areas in the Netherlands. **Lorenzo Gennari (AMA)** stated that preliminary research in Italy shows high mortality rates for mussels due to high temperatures. More research and data are needed to address these issues effectively.

A Focus Group will be created.

5. Blue crab

- Presentation of draft recommendation by **Lorenzo Gennari (AMA)**
- Exchange of views with the Working Group members and decision on next steps

Lorenzo Gennari (AMA) presented the draft recommendation. Nothing has changed since the presentation of the issue given during the WG2 meeting in June. He welcomes comments and feedback.

Andrea Fabris (API) mentioned that it will be difficult to work once again and to renovate the areas where the whole ecosystem has been destroyed by the blue crab. **Paul Denekamp (Stichting Vissenbescherming)** asked if the crabs have any territorial behaviour. **Thibault Pivetta (EMPA)** mentioned it will impact the entire Mediterranean over time, so they need to plan exchanges with EU and non-EU collaborators around the Mediterranean. **Angeles Longa Portabales (Consello Regulador do Mexillon de Galicia)** mentioned the idea of promoting the blue crab as a quality product. **Lorenzo Gennari (AMA)** does not think it is territorial. Some local predator could contain the growth of this population, but it was also proven that blue crab eats juveniles of some of these species. **The Chair** mentioned the exploitation of blue crab in the US and if Italy could work with them. **Lorenzo Gennari (AMA)** answered that it is too early to tell, they are in contact with the University of North Carolina. **Paul Denekamp (Stichting Vissenbescherming)** asked if there was any answer from the Commission or any progress on the research. **Lorenzo Gennari (AMA)** mentioned that they don't have any published results yet.

The Chair asked about the measures put in place by producers, such as cages on the ground. **Angeles Longa Portabales (Consello Regulador do Mexillon de Galicia)** mentioned the idea to use noisy devices. **Thibault Pivetta (EMPA)** answered that they tried this in northern Brittany with spider crab, but they got used to the



noise in the long term. **Lorenzo Gennari (AMA)** stated that on bottom mussel farms in the UK, they had systems to capture these crabs with nets. **Antonio Correia (APA)** mentioned that it is time to move to more controlled technology and to industrialize the process, instead of being dependent on a lot of factors that they cannot control and foresee.

A call for new volunteers will be open. The FG leader will decide on the next steps.

6. Molluscan welfare

- Update by FG Leader **Paul Denekamp (Vissenbescherming)**
- Exchange of views with the Working Group members and decision on next steps

Paul Denekamp (Stichting Vissenbescherming) updated the members on this matter. The recommendation was sent to the WG2. It was approved and will now be sent to the ExCom for comments and approval.

Thibault Pivetta (EMPA) mentioned that it is crucial to move forward together on these research perspectives and he believes that indicators are important. However, they must allow sufficient time and resources for research before defining and implementing them. Progress on questions around low trophic aquaculture should also be made collectively. **Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISH)** and **Addy Risseeuw (PO Mosselcultuur)** agreed.

The next FG meeting will be organised after receiving the reply from the European Commission.

7. Preserve our sovereignty in terms of hatcheries and develop a “pathogen free” label to allow secure exports

- Presentation of draft recommendation by FG leader **Audrey Lainé (CNC)**
- Exchange of views with the Working Group members and decision on next steps

The Chair reminded the members that this recommendation is included in this year's Strategic Plan and must be approved by the end of October 2024. **Audrey Lainé (CNC)** presented the draft recommendation and mentioned the new comments by **Hein Sas (NORA)** that will be taken into account.

Hein Sas (NORA) stated that the restoration of flat oysters is a very important technological breakthrough, and it is crucial to produce Bonamia-free and tolerant flat oysters. He suggested including this innovation in the recommendation because it could be useful for aquaculture. Identifying genetic markers is a significant development that should also be included. **Audrey Lainé (CNC)** proposed adding this point to the paragraph that mentions pathogen-free status authorised and noted in the regulation and she will also add a recommendation in this sense, particularly about the technique presented.

The recommendation was approved by WG2 with the proposed changes. Once it has been amended accordingly, it will be sent to the ExCom for approval before the end of October.

8. Use of DG MARE mapping studies for the development of low-trophic aquaculture

- Update on activities by FG leader **Thibault Pivetta (EMPA)**



- Exchange of views with the Working Group members and decision on next steps

The Chair mentioned that this recommendation is also part of the Strategic Plan and must be approved before the end of October 2024. **Thibault Pivetta (EMPA)** updated the members on this matter.

Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISH) mentioned the need to consider the environmental impact and be more concerned about the impact on food security. **Thibault Pivetta (EMPA)** answered that they can discuss the notion of nutrients, but it is beyond the scope of this recommendation. **Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISH)** suggested it could be another recommendation. **Lorenzo Gennari (AMA)** emphasized that this recommendation shouldn't be changed due to time constraints, but it should serve as the foundation for other recommendations.

The draft recommendation has been circulated to WG3 for comments and approval. It will then be sent to the ExCom for approval before the end of October.

9. Framing new EC financial tools to support Good Husbandry Practices for shellfish farming (waste, recognition of ecosystem services, restoration projects)

- Exchange of views with the Working Group members and decision on next steps

The Chair mentioned that this recommendation is planned in the 2024-2025 Strategic Plan.

The Chair suggested to focus on ecosystem services. He also suggested to have discussions with DG MARE, EATiP, and researchers. **Thibault Pivetta (EMPA)** suggested focusing the recommendation either on recognising ecosystem services or on a more thematic topic. **David Bassett (EATiP)** mentioned that they should check with DG MARE before starting to work on that. He also mentioned the future guidance document on environmental benefits with ecosystem services. **Addy Risseeuw (PO Mosselcultuur)** would recommend first discussing the principle only and then the types of practices they want to reward. **Hein Sas (NORA)** recommended looking at a broad range of practices with many examples of restorative aquaculture. **Ola Öberg (RECIRKFISH)** mentioned the issue of food security. **Angeles Longa Portabales (Consello Regulador do Mexillon de Galicia)** suggested to focus on nitrogen sequestration.

A Focus Group will be created. A first FG meeting will be organised to determine the focus of the recommendation, before DG MARE will be asked for its input and the relevant persons in DG AGRI will be contacted.

10. AOB & conclusions

The Chair concluded the meeting. **The next WG2 meeting will be held online the 4 February 2025 (morning).**

