



The Role of Advisory Councils under the Common Fisheries Policy

A lunch seminar by the Market and Aquaculture Advisory Councils

Tuesday, 12 November 2019

European Parliament, Brussels

Welcome and introduction by Giuseppe Ferrandino MEP

MEP Ferrandino emphasised that all new members of the EP should get to know the Advisory Councils and use the knowledge that only those who work with fishers and aquaculture every day can provide.

The previous week, Mr Ferrandino presented a speech at the MAC & NWWAC Workshop on Marine Plastics and the Seafood Supply Chain, which was the perfect opportunity to share best practices on this important topic. After the workshop, he was even more convinced that more ambition is needed to solve the problem of marine plastics. This battle needs to be won with fisheries actors and the production chain.

Concerning aquaculture, Mr Ferrandino recalled that the European Parliament recognised the importance of aquaculture through an own initiative report in 2018. The EP amended the EMFF proposal to rename the fund and call it the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and they will continue to defend the need to unlock the potential of the aquaculture sector, if negotiations are initiated. The output of aquaculture needs to be increased if we want to prevent overfishing. The aquaculture sector is right when asking for simpler rules and less bureaucracy. Much improvement is required at Member States' and regional levels. The European institutions, together with the Advisory Councils, should help Member States towards this much needed simplification. The aquaculture sector should know that they have a friend for the next five years.

MEP Van Dalen underscored the importance of the lunch seminar and of the three guest speakers.



The role of Advisory Councils: Pascale Colson, Policy Officer, DG MARE D3, European Commission

Access the presentation here: <https://marketac.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/DG-MARE.pdf>

Mrs Colson emphasised that the Advisory Councils are essential to provide experience and knowledge to the European Commission. The Commission needs support from the Advisory Councils, since these include inside stakeholders that can provide recommendations and explain problems. Ms Colson provided an overview of the existing Advisory Councils, their role (particularly Art. 44 of the CFP), their composition, the applicable rules, and the role of the Commission at their meetings.

As a conclusion, Ms Colson outlined that Advisory Councils are an essential part of the governance of the CFP. This has undoubtedly allowed the CFP to benefit from continuous stakeholder engagement. Advisory Councils play a key role in the context of regionalization. They have the knowledge and experience we need when preparing new legislation. Their advices and recommendations have been very useful on a number of key legislative files.

The Market Advisory Council: Guus Pastoor, Chair of the Executive Committee, MAC

Access the presentation here: <https://marketac.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Guus-Pastoor-The-MAC.pdf>

Mr Pastoor explained that the Market Advisory Council is a horizontal body that concerns all markets in Europe and all Member States, so it is not specifically focused on one activity or one product. This provides the MAC a lot of room to move, but also the need to find a focus.

Mr Pastoor provided an overview of the EU seafood market, including world production of fisheries and aquaculture, the supply balance for fisheries and aquaculture products, the EU market trends and self-sufficiency rates, and extra-EU imports trend and ratio of imported fish value vs. meat. Mr Pastoor outlined the structure and membership of the MAC, the main priorities and deliverables for Year 4, and listed the most recent recommendations and planned meetings. He also mentioned the importance of discussing the social dimension of the market in the future. The MAC can be a forum for overarching issue that other ACs do not take on board due to their more regional or specific approach.

The Aquaculture Advisory Council: Javier Ojeda, Chair of the Executive Committee, AAC

Access the presentation here: <https://marketac.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Presentation-AAC-EP.pdf>



Mr Ojeda explained that the Aquaculture Advisory Council is a horizontal body which covers all the EU countries. The recommendations from the AAC include the opinions of all stakeholders in EU aquaculture.

Mr Ojeda outlined that aquaculture is a very diverse activity, undertaken mainly by microenterprises and with very few large enterprises. In the past years, aquaculture production in the EU has stagnated, even though the EU has the best standards for aquaculture. The AAC is working to change the situation. Aquaculture can be a player when it comes to providing sustainable food in the EU.

Mr Ojeda provided an overview of the topics covered by the AAC and of the most recently adopted advices and position papers.

Questions and discussion with the audience: Moderated by Peter Van Dalen MEP

Mr Van Dalen wanted to know if Mr Pastoor and Mr Ojeda believed that the Advisory Councils matter in the decision-making procedures, particularly if MEPs value their position and advices, taking into account the very important role of regionalisation.

Mr Ojeda responded that the ACs work for the European Commission and the Member States. Nevertheless, the value of their advice is powerful enough to influence other institutions. Most of the bottlenecks on the development of sustainable aquaculture in the EU are in the regions, so they need to find a way to reach the regions. Mr Ojeda expressed his conviction that the advices are taken into consideration, which is why ACs strive for consensus when preparing them.

Mr Pastoor responded that the ACs exist to provide advice, but that does not mean that the advices will be taken over. That depends on the topic, quality, and specificity of the advice. In general, ACs have so many different stakeholders that, if there is a consensus, then there is a broad support from the different organisations. Still, consensus is not always possible. The most important is to ensure that members are dedicated to the work of the ACs. The EP should know about the work of the ACs, which is a very important piece of information.

David Risseuw, AAC Vice-Chair, wanted to know Mr Van Dalen's views on how to reach a "breakthrough", meaning a better water quality for aquaculture activities to expand, more space for aquaculture production, and more financial means for innovation.

Mr Van Dalen stated that the advices from ACs should not focus only on the PECH Committee. It is important to have a good contact with the ENVI Committee. The ACs should follow up on reports in both committees. It is always possible to make suggestions on amendments.



Mr Pastoor stated that it is an issue that should be discussed at the MAC. The scale of production is an issue. There is plenty of space in the market. If there is an EU product, there is no need to import. Mr Pastoor exemplified that Norwegian salmon has been a success due to the large scale.

Mr Van Dalen highlighted that the PECH Committee has been discussing the activities of China, Russia, and other third countries. In relation to SFPAs, the EU is partaking in sustainable fisheries, involving labourers from the countries, and providing good labour conditions. Mr Van Dalen expressed scepticism that other countries are doing the same. Therefore, he wanted to know what could be operated to deal with these third countries.

Alexandre Rodríguez, LDAC Secretariat, explained that the LDAC is dealing with the external dimension of the CFP. The LDAC promotes transparency and a level playing field in agreements with third countries. It is not possible to compete in an equitable situation, if there is no transparency, and without information on catches and volumes. The LDAC is following-up on the implementation of SFPAs. Mr Rodríguez highlighted that the LDAC Performance Review 2019 included a section on how the LDAC could influence the decision-making process more, particularly, once an advice is agreed and public, how to follow through the decision-making. He exemplified that a LDAC advice had been mentioned in a report by former MEP Linnéa Engström, plus that, in the past, there used to be a set-up system of liaising with specific PECH Committee MEPs.

Sean O'Donoghue, MAC WG1 Chair, underscored that the ACs fully recognise that the recommendations go to the Commission and the Member States. Still, the EP, particularly the PECH Committee, plays a key role as a co-legislator. When the ACs agree on recommendations, these are not always forwarded to the EP. In the past, when discussing important files, the EP would invite a particular AC to do presentations. Mr O'Donoghue called for a closer collaboration, while taking into account the constraints of the CFP.

Mr Van Dalen asked the PECH Committee Secretariat about the possibility to have specific PECH members liaising with the ACs.

The PECH Secretariat replied, that, for the current legislative term, they were not planning to allocate specific PECH members to the ACs, but that it could be something proposed at the next Coordinators Meeting, if some members are interested in specific topics.

Mr Van Dalen proposed to include the issue in the agenda of the next PECH Committee Coordinators' Meetings.

Björn Stockhausen, Greens/EFA Fisheries Advisor, called for caution in relation to the notion that advice from ACs, as stakeholder-led organisations, is automatically good. The Executive Committee ratio is of 60% for the industry and 40% for other interest groups. The memberships ratio is in reality even more disproportionately in favour of the industry given the lack of "Other interest group" members. Therefore, the industry has a greater power to shift discussions in the



ACs. Many ACs are doing a good job but it is necessary to be aware of how they are actually composed.

Andrew Kuyk, MAC WG2 Chair, argued that it is important that co-legislators have access to expertise. In relation to Mr Stockhausen's comments, Mr Kuyk did not see that situation happening in the MAC. The MAC has common principles and no specific activity has a greater power in setting the discussions. Mr Kuyk underscored that fish is competing against other food productions and that there is a deficit of protein. China has a real need to feed its population. In the future, there will be competition for protein sources. China is increasingly competing in the seafood supply chain. Therefore, he wanted to know how the image of fish as food, which is a potentially renewable and low impact source, could be promoted.

Mr Van Dalen recognised the importance of promoting fish as a protein source, adding that it is up to the sector to determine how to promote their image.

Georgi Sabev, APA to MEP Ivo Hristov, highlighted that, in relation to quality schemes of European Geographical Indications, only a small number related to fish products, plus that most of the existing ones were from the UK. Therefore, Mr Sabev wanted to know more about the situation, including local quality schemes.

Mr Pastoor explained that it is quite difficult to get fish products under the mentioned schemes. It is quite difficult to achieve the required exclusivity, since there are usually different people fishing in the same area. It could, nonetheless, be an important topic for certain ACs. More flexibility might be needed in quality schemes rules.

Pim Visser, NSAC/MAC member, stated that he did not recognise the characterisation of the ACs made by Mr Stockhausen. Mr Visser called for an increased budget for the ACs to undertake more scientific engagement, under the next CFP reform. The ACs are dealing with new horizontal topics, such as climate change and plastics and they need sufficient budget for that.

Mrs Colson explained that DG MARE has requested funding for the ACs under the next financing period, which is dependent on the MFF negotiations.

Pim Visser, NSAC/MAC member, argued that ACs should be made eligible for EMFF funding on a horizontal basis.

Mrs Colson further explained that the ACs receive operating grants from the Commission. The ACs can apply for EMFF funding under shared management by answering calls from Member States. At the 2019 Inter-AC Meeting, ACs were also asked about their preferred Commission research funding priorities for the next 2 years. There is also the possibility of funding through calls for proposals for projects under direct management launched by the executive agency EASME.



Javier Lopez, SWWAC Vice-Chair, highlighted that there is an effort by Advisory Councils to find agreement and deliver advice that includes all stakeholders. Still, in some ACs, the “other interest groups” do find some difficulties to make their voice heard, particularly the environmental NGOs. It is necessary to see how to move forward with consensus and how to improve the role of the “other interest groups”. On the requests for independent science, Mr Lopez argued that it can be risky as the ACs’ science would be competing with some already recognised scientific bodies such as ICES. It would be a difficult situation if there were contradictory official scientific advices.

Concluding remarks by Peter van Dalen MEP

Mr Van Dalen thanked everyone for the presentations, which provided more information to the European Parliament about the work that the Advisory Councils are undertaking.