



# Workshop on Ecolabels and Certification Schemes

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

March 2020

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Market Advisory Council

## Overview

The Market Advisory Council, upon request from the European Commission's DG MARE, held several discussions and debates on how ecolabels, certification schemes or voluntary sustainability information for fishery and aquaculture products interact with the EU seafood market (e.g. access to and functioning of the market). These exchanges demonstrated that this rather specific issue could profit from an improved common understanding, while being mindful that there are related aspects which merit investigation from various perspectives. It was thus decided that a workshop would help delve deeper into the aforementioned issues and as such it would allow for discussion on wider concerns related to ecolabels and certification schemes.

## Purpose of the workshop

To bring together members of the MAC, institutions and external experts in a constructive exchange about how voluntary sustainability claims and information on seafood products, including ecolabels and certification schemes, interact with the EU seafood market or certain parts thereof. The workshop outcomes are intended to aid the European Commission in assessing the situation and to help provide guidance to inform any further steps.

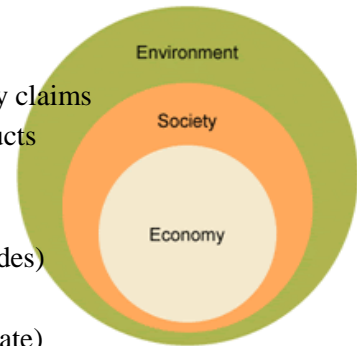
## Proposed Outcomes

- To have, within the MAC a better and more informed level of understanding on the presence and functioning of voluntary sustainability information on seafood products in the EU market, including ecolabels/certification schemes
- To draft a workshop report, likely in a similar format as the workshop on microplastics, to reflect contributions from external experts to inform such shared understanding and possibly including actionable recommendations
- Suggested issues to be discussed:
  - Present (and future) state of voluntary sustainability information in EU seafood market, including ecolabels and certification schemes
  - How different ways of gathering, validating and communicating such sustainability information deliver different outcomes to consumers & business
  - Interaction between public resource management and ecolabelling
  - From EU Commission's response letter ("for consideration"):
    - **Whether there is a limited number of alternatives (question over market access)**
    - **Lack of clarity on the definition of sustainability**
    - **The repartition of costs along the supply chain**
  - International best-practice cases and standardisation in ecolabelling
  - International benchmarking efforts of seafood ecolabels

## Proposed Workshop Agenda

### I. Scope of the workshop

- *Clarification* of terms and the different forms of sustainability claims
  - Sustainability claims on fisheries vs. seafood products
  - Claims aimed at supply chain vs. end consumer
  - Classifying different types of claims:
    1. Fisheries advisory schemes (e.g. seafood guides)
    2. Own claims (whether certified or not)
    3. Independently verified claims (public or private)
    4. Legal information (current framework)



### II. Sustainability claims

- Definition of the *concept of sustainability* in relation to the seafood sector
  - Political: Guidelines by FAO (ecolabels) and EU (certifications)
  - Practical: Industry standards and benchmarks (GSSI/ISEAL)

### III. Assessing sustainability claims

- the *pros and cons* & the *costs and benefits* of sustainability claims (fisheries/aquaculture), by addressing:
  - environmental benefits/impacts on fisheries
  - scope
  - transparency
  - assurances
  - market benefits (how do they help the market to function better?)
  - market limitations (setting requirements on trade/market access?)
  - costs (how are they shared/repartitioned along the supply chain?)
  - consumer understanding (i.e. thinking along “fork-to-farm”) with an awareness of regional differences in EU of consumer attitudes

Format – suggestion of a mix between 1 and 2:

- 1: Inviting relevant speakers
- 2: Holding panel discussion

Both options  
with the aim  
to represent:

1. fishing/catching sector/primary production
2. aquaculture sector
3. middle of chain operators (processors, suppliers, traders)
4. end of chain operators (retailers)
5. NGOs
6. Consumer organisation
7. public/regulatory authorities

#### **IV. Sustainability under the new Commission – From farm-to-fork**

- Environmental: Widening the focus to *life-cycle assessments*
- *Social* (and labour) *dimension*: Sustainability considerations in the framework of:
  - The OECD's Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct
  - The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, their national implementations (and future supply-chain legislation)
  - Impact of ILO Convention C188 on Work in Fisheries Sector and
  - Fair remuneration for those employed in the fishing sector
- Connection to marketing standards framework
- Addressing issues of concern to consumers: animal welfare
- Nutritional sustainability

#### **V. Conclusion**

- Workshop outcomes with possible issue-specific recommendations as they relate to the MAC and its remit

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## Speakers

- Profile of speakers to be invited:
  - Independent and neutral
  - Retailers and market researchers
  - Representative of a consumers' organisations
  - EU and FAO officials
  - Scientists, academics and possibly other Advisory Councils

## Target Audience

- Members of the MAC
- European Commission, MEPs, EP's research service and any other relevant/interested (EU) institution
- Experts, stakeholders and possibly informed consumer groups

## Updated Schedule and Deadlines

- Draft agenda and proposals for speakers to be developed by on basis of agreed ToRs following January WG 3 meeting
- Tentative date: Q1 or early Q2 of 2020 – to be decided January 2020 WG 3 meeting
  - Meeting Venue: Brussels - meeting room (style auditorium) with more than 100 places which may be equipped with receivers and two translation booths
  - Date: May 7 2020 and June 25 2020 (provisional)
- Time frame: 1-day workshop with possibility to extend to 1,5 days depending on speaker availability and agenda
- Contact with speakers: Following adoption of ToRs
- Report on the workshop to be published in its final version not later than one month after the workshop, depending on workshop date

## Resources, inputs and external sources

- Foreseen budget: c. 30,000 EUR (incl. all costs for travel and speakers)
- Possible in-kind collaboration with Commission (interpretation?), other Advisory Councils and Member States