

## Joint MAC/NSAC/NWWAC Webinar

### Blockchain and other new technologies for the transmission of traceability information and other data in the seafood supply chain

#### Terms of Reference

##### Background

The seafood supply chain is continually evolving due to innovation in information and communication technologies. A “digital revolution” in food systems is ongoing with mobile technologies, smart technologies, drones, remote-sensing, distributed computing, blockchain, the Internet of Things and artificial intelligence. Digital solutions, particularly blockchain, could potentially optimise the transmission of traceability information as well as other data along the chain. Together with other existing tools, such as Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM), it could promote further transparency in the seafood supply chain.

As determined by Article 18 of the General Food Law, which aims to ensure a high level of protection of human and health, as well as consumers’ interest in relation to food, the traceability of food, feed, food-producing animals, and any other substance intended to be, or expected to be, incorporated into a food or feed shall be established at all stages of production, processing and distribution<sup>1</sup>. Article 58 of the Fisheries Control Regulation<sup>2</sup> determines that all lots of fisheries and aquaculture products shall be traceable at all stages of production, processing and distribution, from catching or harvesting to retail stage.

In the ongoing revision of this Regulation, the Commission introduced provisions to ensure that traceability information is recorded electronically, so that controls in the seafood supply chain within the internal market are more effective and efficient<sup>3</sup>. If adopted, the Commission

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety

<sup>2</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009 establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy

<sup>3</sup> Articles 56-58 of the Commission’s proposal to amend the Fisheries Control Regulation, which is available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52018PC0368>

will also be empowered to adopt delegated acts on the digitalisation of the traceability information and its electronic transmission. The Farm to Fork Strategy highlights that the revision will contribute to the fight against fraud through an enhanced traceability system<sup>4</sup>. The Strategy aims for a shift to a sustainable food system that can bring environmental, health and social benefits. Besides the above-mentioned traceability information, blockchain can also be a tool for the transmission of other data along the chain with specific purposes, e.g., fisheries control, fight against food fraud, product labelling, information to consumers, voluntary sustainability claims, and certification schemes.

## **Introduction**

Blockchain allows all parts of the seafood supply chain, including fishers, aquaculture farmers, processors, traders, retailers, as well as certification auditors and consumers to secure data that can be tracked to its source. Because it is digital, decentralised and updated in real time, a blockchain tag can contain significantly more information than a physical label. In combination with other practices and technologies, it can be a tool for improved transmission of traceability information and other data along the chain.

## **Purpose of the Webinar**

Focusing on EU-produced products, from sea to plate, the webinar will explore the proactive engagement of seafood operators in the transmission of traceability information and other data along the value chain through new digital solutions, particularly blockchain, including its implementation and potential added value. Primary producers, both fishers and aquaculture farmers, are the first and a crucial link in the seafood value chain. It is important that input data reflects, as much as possible, the reality on board and on the farm, and that the data is securely stored and managed. The webinar will explore the experience of the users of new technologies, such as blockchain, particularly in the North Western Waters and North Sea regions, and draw upon identified strengths, drawbacks, opportunities and challenges to develop recommendations for the legislators on technology uptake and its regulation. The

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<sup>4</sup> The Communication on the Farm to Fork Strategy is available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0381>.

aim of the event is primarily awareness raising and exchange of views, experiences, and best practices, while also identifying ongoing and potential EU policy actions.

### **Proposed Outcomes**

- A better and more informed level of understanding on the uptake of new digital solutions, particularly blockchain, among the members of the Advisory Councils and other participants.
- A workshop report to reflect the contributions from external experts as well as the experiences of the operators of the seafood supply chain, with a specific focus on the North Western Waters and the North Sea operators' experience.

### **Proposed Agenda**

- I. Introduction** (presentation of the topic, background information, relevance)
  - Public policy expert
- II. Technical Presentation(s)**
  - Academic expert (expert on transmission of data in supply chains)
  - Blockchain expert (experience with supply chains)
  - Commission expert (overview of Horizon2020 projects)
- III. Experiences of the Seafood Supply Chain and exchange of views with experts** (short presentations & panel)
  - Fisher (NWW & NS), aquaculture farmer, processor, and retailer (NGO expert as moderator)
- IV. Conclusion** – follow-up, potential recommendations and further steps

### **Profile of Speakers**

- Independent and objective
- Operators and other stakeholders of the seafood supply chain
- Officials of the EU institutions and FAO
- Scientists, academics and experts

### **Target Audience**

- Members of the MAC, NSAC, NWWAC and other Advisory Councils
- EU institutions and research services
- Other experts and stakeholders

### **Indicative Schedule and Deadlines**

- Development of agenda and selection of speakers – September 2021
- Webinar – Half-day in November / December 2021
- Publication of webinar report – one month after webinar date

## Resources

- Foreseen budget: €5,000
  - Interpretation (EN, ES, FR): €3,500
  - Translation (EN, ES, FR): €1,500