

Advice

Awareness on the Role of Producer Organisations

Brussels, 3 February 2023

1. Introduction

Under Regulation (EU) No 1379/2013 on the Common Market Organisation in fishery and aquaculture products (CMO Regulation), groupings of fishers or aquaculture farmers can be formally recognised as Producer Organisations (POs), which are expected to play a key role in the day-to-day implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy. In the pursuit of their objectives¹, POs must prepare production and marketing plans, which can be funded by the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF). Associations of POs, regrouping several POs from one or more Member State, can also be established. These follow the same objectives, can coordinate and develop activities of common interest, and may receive EMFAF funding as well.

2. Examples of POs pursuing the objectives of Article 7 of the CMO Regulation²

- *Promote the viable and sustainable fishing activities of their members in full compliance with the Common Fisheries Policy and in environmental law, while respecting social policy and, where the Member State concerned so provides, participating in the management of marine biological resources*

POs ensure that their members' fishing activities respect the CFP and are environmentally and economically sustainable, including through jointly decided management measures (e.g., effort management, technical measures, and landing limitations). As an example, in Brittany, following high yields of Northern Albacore that were not followed by an increase of quotas, Les Pêcheurs de Bretagne set-up individual quota allocation and vessel monitoring to avoid market overload, which resulted in a two-month campaign that allowed reasoned and regular

¹ The objectives are listed in Article 7 and cover sustainable production, market situations, and environmental impacts (i.e., improving economic returns, stabilising the markets, reducing the environmental impact, and limiting bycatches).

² These are a small set of examples. Across the EU, many other examples of actions by POs could be found.

landings for buyers, and a reasonable price for fishers. Plus, during the COVID-19 pandemic, POs provided support to fishers on the market side by balancing supply and demand.

- *Avoid and reduce as far as possible unwanted catches of commercial stocks and, where necessary, make the best use of such catches, without creating a market for those that are below the minimum conservation reference size*

POs are involved in a series of scientific projects to improve data acquisition and reduce the environmental impact of fishing, which are sea basin and activity specific: bycatch reduction (e.g., DISCARDLESS), limiting the impact of fishing on sensitive species (e.g., PIFIL, LICADO, DOLPHINFREE). As an example, the Swedish Pelagic Federation PO was involved in a project that, through a pelagic trawl grid, successfully contributed to a reduction of unwanted catches of saithe during herring fishing. A similar project is being carried out to help avoid fish bycatch in the North Sea sprat fishery.

- *Contribute to the traceability of fishery products and access to clear and comprehensive information for consumers*

POs are an important link in the supply chain between producers, first buyers and consumers. To promote the viable and sustainable fishing activities to consumers, POs can participate in certification schemes, which also enables more information to reach consumers. For example, OPP Puerto de Celeiro promoted longline Hake via certification and blockchain processes. Their “Friends of the Sea” certification, funded by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), allowed producers a price increase between 4 and 7%. As another example, PO Rederscentrale developed “Visserij Verduurzaamt” in collaboration with scientific institute ILVO, a recognition based on measurement of environmental, economic, and social sustainability of fishing vessel operations and a letter of commitment by the vessel owners.

In Spain, APROMAR, which is a recognised PO, has developed a national strategic communication plan named “Acuicultura de España” (“Aquaculture in Spain”) that, since 2019, develops annual campaigns with the objective of improving the image and reputation of the Spanish aquaculture sector within the society. In this plan, there are many actions

developed targeting all the interest groups, such as: collaborations in social media with influencers, TV spots, digital press articles, events for local administration staff, organised trips to farms with journalists, among others.

- *Contribute to the elimination of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing*

POs contribute to the elimination of IUU fishing through the promotion of compliance with fishing regulations, supporting traceability, and enhancing transparency and data quality in catch declarations. For example, French fisheries POs annually publish a document grouping all fishing regulations applicable to their members, including maps of bans and specific regulation, gear-specific chapters, and lists of technical measures. As another example, the Swedish Pelagic Federation conducted a study to assess how onboard sampling can best be done to determine species composition of the catch.

3. Recommendation

Taking into account the responsibilities given to POs and the lack of awareness of their key role in contributing to the objectives of the CFP and of the CMO, the MAC believes that, in coordination and cooperation with the Commission and the interested Member States, that the below actions should be implemented:

<u>Lead Organisation</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
MAC	Schedule short presentations of scientific programs carried by POs and of Industry-Science partnerships, in order to allow members to see and understand all the measures and actions taken to reduce the environmental impacts of fishing (including the reduction of bycatches) and aquaculture.	Every WG1 meeting of Year 7

EAPO	Write document with all market measures put in place to adjust and stabilise the market in the recent crisis, including to highlight the role of fisheries POs in increasing the value of the catches via organisation of the market, and thus limiting the impact of fish stocks resulting from an increased and stabilised income. The results will be presented at the September meeting of the MAC WG1.	Summer 2023
EAPO & FEAP	Write guide (in PDF format) listing all the fisheries and aquaculture POs and their work, contribution to secondary CMO objectives, size, and funding. In the case of fisheries POs, should cover all their fisheries and national quota management system. The guide should point out the contribution of POs to food security, to promotion of high food quality and to safety standards, all whilst maintaining employments in coastal and rural areas. The guide should also highlight the key role of POs have in creating a link between stakeholders, be it in scientific programs, with national administrations, fishers and aquaculture farmers, EU administration, and NGOs. The results will be presented in MAC meetings by EAPO. Share the guide with the Commission, the Member States and the EP PECH Committee.	First quarter of 2024
MAC	Organise a workshop for EU POs to share operational good practices, projects managed and management measures. Member States should be invited and	Autumn 2024

	<p>deliver a specific presentation on the importance of including PMP fundings in the Operational Programmes, thus raising awareness on the importance of PMPs to allow POs to reach the objectives of the CFP. Concrete examples of the application of PMP funding should be shared with all Member States to highlight the importance of having equitable PMP fundings across the EU. The assistance and support of the Commission is requested. Details of this workshop are to be agreed by the end of 2023.</p>	
<p>MAC (EAPO Rapporteur)</p>	<p>Draft advice to highlight key role of POs in production across the EU, including fisheries co-management, and the added value of involving producers in management. The advice should, inter alia, demonstrate how sustainable fishing can be achieved through a bottom-up approach to resource management and stakeholder involvement. Enhancing the possibilities for the Transnational PO (Association) structure should also be part of this. Market benefits should be covered in the advice. The advice should also aim at increasing the knowledge about POs amongst the MAC members are who are not POs.</p>	<p>Autumn 2023</p>