

Working Group 3: EU control and sanitary issues, consumer rules

Draft Minutes

Thursday, 30 March 2023 (09:00 – 12:45 CET)

NH Brussels EU Berlaymont

Interpretation in EN, ES, FR

Welcome from the Chair, Benoît Thomassen

Click [here](#) to access the Chair's presentation.

Adoption of draft agenda and of the last meeting minutes (27.01.23): adopted

Action points of the last meeting

- **State-of-play of the decision made during the last meeting – information**
- **Animal Welfare:**
 - Continue monitoring developments on the revision of the EU legislation
 - Ongoing
- **Food Security:**
 - Members to be encouraged to contact the consultant directly for bilateral interviews in the context of the study on risks and vulnerabilities of the EU food supply chain
 - Members were encouraged at the meeting
- **Food Contact Materials:**
 - Continue monitoring developments on the revision of the EU legislation
 - Ongoing
- **Sustainable Food System Framework:**
 - Ahead of the next meeting, Secretariat to circulate a questionnaire to the members on the preferred policy options
 - Under the draft agenda of the next meeting, exchange of views among the members concerning the replies to be scheduled
 - Secretariat's questionnaire: 28 February – 13 March 2023
 - Agenda item scheduled
- **AOB:**
 - Under the draft agenda of the next meeting, items on arsenic, heavy metals, and plant-based imitations to be scheduled
 - Secretariat to liaise with LDAC Secretariat on seabed mining



- Agenda items on arsenic and plant-based imitations scheduled
- Topic under the competence of LDAC – Ongoing Focus Group in LDAC – Suggestion of a paragraph on health impacts / exposure to heavy metals

Towards a Strong and Sustainable EU Algae Sector

- **Presentation of communication by Commission representative (MARE A2)**

Click [here](#) to access the presentation.

The Chair recalled that, on 15 November 2022, the Commission published the communication “towards a strong and sustainable EU algae sector”, which identified 23 actions aimed at (1) improving the governance framework and legislation, (2) improving the business environment, (3) closing knowledge, research, technological and innovation gaps, and (4) increasing social awareness and market acceptance of algae and algae-based products in the EU.

Lorenzo Paliotta (DG MARE) emphasised that algae can contribute to many objectives, thanks to the biochemical compounds and properties, including decarbonisation, zero pollution, circularity, preservation and restoration of biodiversity, ecosystems protection, and development of environmental services. Algae biomass can have many commercial applications, including food industry, animal feed, pharmaceuticals, bio-based packaging, biofuels, plant bio stimulants, among others. When cultivated at sea, algae can reduce water eutrophication and ocean acidification. The latest Commission’s report on the bioeconomy highlighted algae as the most promising sector of the blue bioeconomy.

According to the Blue Bioeconomy Report 2022, which was published by EUMOFA, seaweed culture and harvesting has significant potential for various sectors, while contributing to the fight against climate change, the introduction of new products, and the creation of new jobs. The report also highlights seaweed as a blue carbon and seaweed farming as a motor for regional economies. The main conclusion was that significant progress was still needed, as seaweed farming was still quite small-scale in the EU. The regulatory framework for seaweed licensing and permits is uncoordinated and involves many regulatory actors at national and local level.

Mr Paliotta drew attention to the global production of algae. Production has been growing in the past century, but Europe is not represented amongst the main producing countries. Despite the marginal share in the global seaweed market, given the favourable market prospects, the EU can develop a strong algae industry. The EU demand for algae products is growing. The markets for chlorella and spirulina are accelerating. The vegan and vegetarian population is growing in Europe, plus consumers are increasingly health and climate conscious. Therefore, the demand for algae is expected to continue to grow. The EU is a top importer worldwide of seaweed products.

Mr Paliotta provided an overview of existing initiatives to support the algae sector, including funding calls, business support mechanisms, ocean literacy and awareness raising, and different studies to support the European Green Deal. In the context of the EU Algae Initiative, the Commission identified problems, objectives, and action areas. 23 actions gathered into four priorities are proposed. The four



action areas are: 1) the improvement of governance framework and legislation, 2) supporting the improvement of business environment, 3) closing knowledge, data, technological and innovation gaps, and 4) increasing social awareness and acceptance. The Commission representative recalled that the EU Algae Initiative was announced on 15 November 2022 and provided examples of market-related actions.

Mr Paliotta explained that, in order to support the initiative, in February 2022, the Commission established the EU4Algae Forum. The forum includes around 700 members across seven working groups, which will assist in the implementation of the actions of the initiative, while promoting innovation and market access in the algae sector. The forum members come from all over Europe, plus some members from other parts of the world. The Commission representative drew attention to the funding of pilot projects, under the implementation of action 9, to support reorientation of fisher's careers to regenerative ocean farming.

Mr Paliotta informed that there was engagement with other institutional institutions. The European Parliament was preparing a motion for resolution and the European Economic and Social Committee was preparing an opinion on the matter. Feedback had been positive. Concerning the next steps, the Commission representative informed that the Commission was coordinating the implementation of the 23 actions with the Member States, the industry, and other relevant stakeholders. To increase awareness and communication, the 1st EU Algae Awareness Summit would be taking place from 5 to 7 October 2023 in Paris. The aim of the event would be to inspire public authorities.

- **Exchange of views**

Guus Pastoor (Visfederatie) commented that the initiative was a positive manner to find new ways to provide food and feed in the market. Several related initiatives were underway in the Netherlands. Mr Pastoor wondered how it could be guaranteed that this production would be whitening the existing environmental limits. According to some scientific presentations, the carrying capacity of many marine areas was limited, which meant that algae extraction would interfere with other biomass. Therefore, he wanted to know if the Commission had information on the maximum capacity, per basin, for the production of algae, while respecting sustainability.

Lorenzo Paliotta (DG MARE) responded that the Commission wanted to ensure that sustainability was taken in due account in the promotion of the algae sector. The Commission launched calls on regenerative farming. A new study would be launched on supporting a sustainable algae industry, which would provide more insight on the capacity of the various sea basins.

Maris Stulgis (DG MARE) stated that the Commission shared the same doubts as Mr Pastoor, which was the reason to launch the study mentioned by Mr Paliotta. The study would cover the availability of nutrients, potential environmental impacts, and theoretical availability of maritime space. According to a study on algae and climate, there are around 100 thousand square kilometres of land that is not appropriate for agriculture, which could be used for on-land algae cultivation. This could deliver more than 100 million tonnes of algae biomass.



Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) highlighted that, for the past 30 years, there has been efforts to combine shellfish farming and algae farming. Problems with the Member States remained. Under the directive on marine spatial planning, there were no compulsory measures. Business operators need legal certainty before investing. Mr Guillaumie added that he did not see added value in participating in the forum. The initiative was positive, but clearer figures on the areas dedicated to algae farming were needed, while accounting for the necessary political will. He emphasised that climate impact also needed to be considered.

Maris Stulgis (DG MARE) recognised that the concerns of Mr Guillaumie were valid. The algae sector was quite niche in the EU market. There were known problems. The aquaculture sector is a competence of the Member States, which meant that each Member State decided on the allocation of licenses for farming and on the allocation of maritime space. The Commission aimed to work together with the national aquaculture authorities to inspire changes in legislation and approach, so that the potential value of the algae sector is recognised. The Commission set-up the Aquaculture Assistance Mechanism and the Marine Spatial Planning Assistance Mechanism, which, in collaboration with the relevant stakeholders and national authorities, would help in the coordination for the allocation of space.

Javier Ojeda (FEAP) expressed satisfaction that there were efforts to develop the algae industry. Mr Ojeda emphasised the importance of international trade in the context of algae production. The efforts of the Commission to boost algae production were remarkable, so results on the economic and social dimensions should be available soon. Key performance indicators on algae indicators should provide an idea on whether the Commission's actions were delivering on the targets. Mr Ojeda wanted to know when the Commission would be informing on the results of the key performance indicators of the algae production in the EU.

Maris Stulgis (DG MARE) responded that, in 2026/2027, there would be an evaluation of the Algae Initiative. The key performance indicators will need to be considered. The added value of the sector is created by the industry, while the role of the Commission was to support the industry. Mr Stulgis exemplified that, according to the Irish authorities, the sector was expected to grow 30% per year in Ireland.

Javier Ojeda (FEAP) commented that forecasts from the Member States did not always meet the objectives. Expectations should be developed by the Commission with caution. The challenges of developing food in the coasts of the EU should be considered. There were already examples amongst shellfish and finfish aquaculture producers. Therefore, the key performance indicators would be essential to demonstrate whether the initiative delivered results among the primary producers.

Patrick Murphy (IS&WFPO) emphasised the complexity in the legislation of the Member States. Engagement with the Member States was necessary. Mr Murphy underscored the importance of marketing, as it was the only way to have a viable future for the sector. There must be clean waters and skilled workers.

Maris Stulgis (DG MARE) exemplified that the Irish authorities have a strategy to develop the sector. The Commission was looking forward for the strategies of the Member States. One of the aims, under



the initiative, was to create a licensing toolkit, which would provide an overview of the licensing procedure, timing, and allocation practices, in the different Member States.

Patrick Murphy (IS&WFPO) argued that the classification of the industry was an essential point. The structures could provide protection for marine biodiversity. There was a positive impact on the environment, for example by preventing the erosion of bays. These positive impacts should be recognised in the licensing.

Maris Stulgis (DG MARE) expressed agreement with Mr Murphy.

- **Way forward**

The Chair expressed support for the development of advice on the matter. The Chair asked Mr Stulgis about the topics that would be relevant to address, particularly in the context of social awareness.

Maris Stulgis (DG MARE) responded that ideas and practical solutions would be welcomed. The business support mechanisms could also be considered. There were data and knowledge deficiencies in the algae sector, including on the exact amounts of algae produced in Europe.

The Chair proposed the preparation by the Secretariat of a questionnaire to the members, in order to gather input for the development of advice.

Emiel Brouckaert (EAPO) emphasised that the questionnaire should focus on market aspects, instead of production and marine spatial planning matters.

Matthias Keller (Bundesverband der deutschen Fischindustrie und des Fischgrosshandels e.V.) suggested to coordinate with the Aquaculture Advisory Council, in order to consider the production aspects too.

The Secretary General committed to contacting the Secretariat of the Aquaculture Advisory Council to know the stage of their work on the topic, plus about potential collaboration.

Hygiene and Sanitary Issues

- **Exchange of views about upcoming legislation on the maximum levels of inorganic arsenic in certain foodstuffs with Veerle Vanheusden, SANTE E2**
- **Way forward**

The Chair informed that, due to the unexpected unavailability of Ms Vanheusden, the agenda item would be postponed for the next meeting.

Plant-Based Imitations of Fisheries and Aquaculture Products

- **Presentation of case study about labelling problems in the market by Luis García, Conxemar**

Click [here](#) to access the presentation.



Luis García (Conxemar) called for the development of specific legislation for plant-based imitation products. The barrier between fair and unfair competition could be difficult to define. The issue was about informing the consumer, but also about capturing the attention of consumers. The denomination of the products played a key role in attracting the attention of consumers. All food products were regulated by Regulation 1169/2011 on Food Information to Consumers, while specific rules were also applicable to fishery and aquaculture products, such as under Regulation 1379/2013 on the Common Market Organisation.

Mr García explained that the main findings were discovered in different countries of the EU. Vegan companies use trademarks and commercial designations related to the fishing and aquaculture sector, or the name of species written in a morphologically modified manner. The number of references available in the market has increased and it is expected to grow in the near future. There are labelling claims and pictorial references that refer to the sea or to fish. There are also messages that can be perceived as particularly detrimental to the image of the fishing sector. These cases of unclear labelling practices could confuse consumers.

Mr García provided examples of products in Spain, the Netherlands, Poland, Germany, Czech Republic, Finland, Sweden, Belgium and Hungary. These include use of commercial designations with morphological modifications, health claims associated with fish products, use of pictorials related to fish or sea, claims alluding to the fishing sector, among others. Even though these products are composed of vegetable ingredients, such as soy, their advertising does not highlight these.

María Luisa Álvarez Blanco (FEDEPESCA) thanked Mr García for the clear presentation. Ms Álvarez argued that it was important to involve all relevant DGs of the Commission. Information was being provided to consumers in a misleading manner with the aim of penalising fisheries and aquaculture products.

Nicolás Fernández Muñoz (OPP72) underscored that, despite the existence of different DGs, there was only one Commission. The topic should be addressed by all relevant DGs. The Commission and the Member States should not allow fraud in the market. The aim of these products were to mislead the consumer. There was a lack of responsibility from the Commission and the Member States to act.

Christine Absil (Good Fish) wondered if there had been research on consumer perception, in order to determine whether consumers were indeed being misled into thinking that these were fishing products.

The Chair stated that the concerns expressed by Ms Absil should be reflected in the recommendations of the draft advice on the topic. Data was needed on the matter.

Nicolás Fernández Muñoz (OPP72) argued that it went beyond the consumer perception. The focus should be on the fraudulent intention. It would not be realistic to ask the opinion of millions of consumers. Even if only a few felt misled, it was still relevant. These fraudulent intentions had an impact on companies across the entire fisheries and aquaculture supply chain. Mr Fernández further argued that even though consumer perception was important, it was also necessary to consider the impacts on the sector.



The Chair emphasised that his suggestion was to cover data on consumer perception in the recommendations, but not to focus only on that aspect. In order to act, the Commission will also request data. The Chair exemplified that, in the context of the caviar sector, there had been also labelling issues. In this case, the response of the Commission had been that the legislation was clear and that, in case of fraud, operators had to refer to the courts.

Guus Pastoor (Visfederatie) stated that there were similar issues in other sectors, for example in the dairy sector. Mr Pastoor stated that the way forward was not clear. First, it was necessary to determine whether the existing legislation was sufficiently clear. Second, in many cases, it would be necessary to go to court to prove that there were misleading practices. Ongoing developments in other sectors should be considered. There were also initiatives in the European Parliament. Complaints to national authorities might be needed. He added that, considering the different national languages, it would not be easy to interview consumers about their perception.

Carlos Ruiz (ANFACO-CECOPECA) highlighted that DG AGRI had reacted to cases of “vegan chicken” products. The Spanish administration had commented on the case too. DG AGRI took into account the existence of a Common Market Organisation for meat products. Therefore, DG MARE should also take into account the approach of DG AGRI.

Miguel Lizaso (DG MARE) expressed support for the approach of the MAC in such a complex matter. The described practices did not constitute exactly fraud, which meant that it was difficult to react to. Further reflection on these developments was needed. In the meat and dairy sectors, there had been different attempts to react. National legislations on misleading practices and fraud needed to be considered. There were several factors at play, such as legal definitions and intentions. DG MARE was trying to raise awareness on the potential problems linked to these developments. DG MARE was in contact with DG SANTE to develop a common approach. In the past, the Food Information to Consumers Regulation was sufficient, but that potentially that was not the case anymore.

Luis García (Conxemar) argued that the use of certain denominations and the provision of partial information could be illegal, which meant that court cases would be needed. In other cases, the practices would not be illegal, but the Commission should act due to the lack of applicable legislative framework, in order to prevent ambiguity. Mr García stated that he was not aware of consumer studies, but there was an increasing number of advertising campaigns, especially directed at younger consumers, focused on these aspects. The labelling of plant-based products should reflect their composition, particularly of the origin of their protein.

Matthias Keller (Bundesverband der deutschen Fischindustrie und des Fischgrosshandels e.V.) recalled that, in Germany, a guidance document was adopted by the government, following consultation with consumers and operators. The products presented in Mr García’s presentation were respectful of the mentioned guidelines. In order to determine whether a practice was misleading, the only appropriate way would be to go to court. Court actions would be needed across different Member States for each product. Mr Keller stated that he was not opposed to the adoption of advice to the European Commission, but that not many results were expected.



María Luisa Álvarez Blanco (FEDEPESCA) stated that court cases against individual products would require too much time. The development of national legislation would also be detrimental to the existence of a common framework in the EU market. EU-wide solutions were needed. Ms Álvarez expressed doubts also about the nutritional aspects of these products, which could lead to confusion among consumers. She called for a general framework applicable in all Member States. There were grounds to revise the existing legislation or to create new legislation specifically for these products.

Miguel Lizaso (DG MARE) expressed appreciation for the presentation and the interventions of Mr García. In terms of way forward, there were cases that, based on the national legislation, operators should legally react. At EU-level, there was a need for the perceptions and forecasts of the MAC, in order to address the current and future issues. Awareness on these issues was needed.

The Chair agreed that, at present, operators could act through court cases based on the existing national legislation. In the future, there should be changes to EU-level legislation.

- **Consideration of draft advice proposed by Conxemar**

The Secretary General provided an overview of the draft advice on “improving the labelling legislation for plant-based imitations of fisheries and aquaculture products”. The Secretary General emphasised that the expression “unclear labelling practices” was used to avoid juridical discussions on whether these practices are “misleading” or “fraudulent” in context of the Food Information to Consumers Regulation.

Pierre Commère (ADEPALE), in relation to recommendation b), suggest referring also to “accurate information to consumers that avoids any misleading”, instead of merely a “level-playing-field”.

María Luisa Álvarez Blanco (FEDEPESCA), in relation to the last point of recommendation e), suggested to refer to “consumer perception”.

Guus Pastoor (Visfederatie) argued that, as the main issue was labelling, the last point of recommendation e) should be “consumer understanding and perception”, deleting “interest”.

The Chair stated that the main aim of the recommendation was to recommend the commissioning of studies to the European Commission. The Chair wondered whether it would be relevant to include a more explicit recommendation against the use of fish-related denominations by plant-based products. In case of differing opinions, these could all be reflected in the text.

María Luisa Álvarez Blanco (FEDEPESCA) expressed support for a clear positioning by the MAC. Consumers should be able to make decisions based on accurate information.

The Secretary General recalled that the advice of 22 July 2021 on labelling of vegetarian and vegan fish products included an annex with different labelling solutions based on the views of various members.

The Chair suggested to repeat the mentioned annex in the new draft advice.



Luis García (Conxemar) highlighted that several plant-based products included environmental and sustainability claims. These claims give the perception that non-plant-based products are not environmentally sustainable. The Commission should regulate this messaging, so that it is based on real data.

The Chair suggested to include a reference to the advice on substantiating green claims.

The Working Group agreed on the draft advice, as amended, on “improving the labelling legislation for plant-based imitations of fisheries and aquaculture products”.

- **Way forward**

The Chair proposed to put forward the agreed draft advice, as amended, to the Executive Committee for consideration and potential adoption.

Cultured Seafood (“Lab-Grown” / “Cell-Based”)

- **Presentation about ongoing developments by Elena Walden, Good Food Institute**

Click [here](#) to access the presentation.

The Chair recalled that, in previous occasions, members raised the topic of cultured seafood. Furthermore, project call, under the Horizon programme, had been launched to gather knowledge on cultured meat and cultured seafood. There were also several studies available on the matter.

Elena Walden (Good Food Institute) delivered a presentation about cultured seafood, starting by an overview of her organisation, an international non-profit organisation focused on alternative proteins, which was followed by an overview of the science, industry, and regulatory ecosystem for cultivated seafood. Ms Walden explained that “cultivated seafood” is seafood that is grown directly from cells, instead of from catching or farming fish and other seafood. Under this production technique, the product is the same as the conventional seafood down to the molecular level. This technique is also often called “cell-cultured” and “cell-based seafood”. Sometimes, it is also referred to as “lab-grown”, but, as activities scale up, it will be less related to laboratories.

Ms Walden provided an overview of the process of cultivating seafood. A small sample of cells is placed in a cultivator with the addition of ingredients for the cells to multiply. At the end of the process, there is seafood that is the same as conventional one. The process is essentially the same for all species, regardless of being meat or seafood. She continued with an overview of the cultivated seafood industry. Until 2019, the aim has been proving the concept. The cultivated seafood industry was slightly less developed than the cultivated meat industry. The cultivated seafood industry is between the pilot scale and the demonstration scale. Scale-up was underway, as demonstrated by recent announcements of new facilities and investments. Partnerships between conventional seafood and cultivated seafood operators have been announced too. Around 31 companies were globally operating within the cultivated seafood ecosystem. There were focuses on different species.



Ms Walden outlined the regulatory process for cultivated seafood in the EU. Either the Novel Foods Regulation or the Genetically Modified Food and Feed Regulation will apply, but her organisation expects that it will be mostly the former, as genetic modification is not required to cultivate cells. The process involves a full food safety assessment by the European Food Safety Agency of the nutritional and toxicological properties of the product. The overall expected timeline from application to approval decision is expected to be 18 months to 36 months. The Commission has not yet received any application from cultivated food operators.

Ms Walden provided her views on the role of cultivated seafood in relation to conventional seafood. Her organisation does not see alternative food competing with the fishing industry. Globally, demand for seafood is project to rise significantly due to population increase and socioeconomic changes. Wild catches have been stagnant since 1990. There are doubts that the growth in aquaculture production would be able to keep up with the excess demand. Alternative seafood would be a way to meet part of the excess demand, while not adding further pressure on wild fish stocks. Cultivated seafood production could be directed consistently to species whose stocks are most volatile, where most consumer demand is anticipated, and that cannot be farmed as easily. Cultivated seafood production could also be directed in an *ad hoc* way to accommodate rapid shifts in species type to respond to fluctuations in wild stocks. If managed correctly, this could help ensure long-term stability and protection of wild stocks.

Ms Walden emphasised that cultivated seafood was still in the early stages, but that, given the pace of global development in this field, it was ultimately not a question of if, but when this industry will arrive in Europe. The potential benefits of cultivated seafood include helping to protect wild stocks to ensure long-term stability and sustainability. NGOs, industry, but above all policymakers should think ahead now how to reap the benefits of the arrival of this sector in Europe.

- **Exchange of views**

Javier Ojeda (FEAP), concerning the long-term perspective and sustainability, cautioned that, given the reduced size of the cultivated food industry, it was difficult to predict the full impact, particularly in terms of ingredients and carbon footprint. In previous occasions, there were expectations to move away from conventional food, but these experiments did not have the desired results. Mr Ojeda highlighted that consumers ate fish because of the omega3 fatty acids. In the case of cultivated seafood, the omega3 would have to be added, which would have to come from conventional or artificial sources.

Elena Walden (Good Food Institute) responded that, as the industry scales up, her organisation was keeping the long-term issues in mind, including through the commissioning of Life Cycle Assessments for cultivated meat. Based on the information available, the projections are very positive, as long as renewable energy is used. Concerning the expectations on omega3, Ms Walden recognised that that the limited consumer studies on expectations for cultivated seafood flagged the importance of omega3. One of the main challenges for seafood cultivation would be to scale-up animal-free sources of omega3. There was a focus on research and development on this matter. Amongst operators, there was confidence that scaling-up would be possible eventually.



Yobana Bermúdez (AIPCE) wanted to know more about the growing factors for cultivated seafood. Ms Bermúdez asked about the sources of omega3 and other nutrients. Added nutrients were not absorbed by the body the same manner. She also wondered about whether these products would be sold alongside conventional ones or as a replacement.

Elena Walden (Good Food Institute) responded that there was significant research ongoing on alternative sources of omega3, including through plant-based sources and cultivated algae. There were fermentation techniques to make cells produce omega3. Scaling-up the techniques are a challenge the sector is in the process of addressing. In terms of what growth factors are needed to make cultivated seafood, these relate to basic building blocks such as amino acids and simple sugars like glucose, which can be derived from a number of sources, including agricultural residues or side streams. In terms of absorption, the cells absorb everything as closely as possible, similar to inside an animal body. Therefore, the nutritional content and absorption should be quite similar to conventional products. Ms Walden exemplified that some cultivated meat products had been approved in Singapore, which included a nutritional analysis that concluded that the cultivated products were nutritionally comparable to conventional ones.

Patrick Murphy (IS&WFPO), in relation to the name “cultivated seafood”, highlighted that, in aquaculture production, the term “cultivation” was used in the production of mussels. Therefore, there could be problems in terms of labelling and marketing.

Elena Walden (Good Food Institute) responded that, unlike plant-based products, compositionally, cultivated seafood would be the same as conventional seafood. Ms Walden stated that her organisation was also wondering about appropriate labelling options, so that source is clear for the consumer. As an example, if a consumer is allergic to fish, they would also be allergic to cultivated seafood. The term “cultivated” was developed in the context of meat, so there might be a need to consider alternative wording for cultivated seafood, especially accounting for how consumers understand it in comparison with aquaculture products. The translation into different national languages of the EU Member States would also need to be considered.

Patrick Murphy (IS&WFPO) expressed opposition to the designation of these products as “seafood”, since these do not originate from the sea.

María Luisa Álvarez Blanco (FEDEPESCA) argued that the MAC should start discussing the issue of appropriate labelling for cultivated seafood, so that a common position is not developed too late.

Elena Walden (Good Food Institute) responded that it was a relevant policy discussion, while emphasising that it was categorically different from plant-based products. Consumers should be informed about what they are eating, including that molecularly it was the same as seafood. Cultivated seafood operators do not want to deceive consumers into thinking that their products come from conventional production.

María Luisa Álvarez Blanco (FEDEPESCA) emphasised that the MAC should be involved in the policy discussion. Even if the products are molecularly the same, consumers should know that these products are made in a laboratory, in order to make informed choices.



Elena Walden (Good Food Institute) agreed that it was important to communicate the difference to consumers.

Javier Ojeda (FEAP) stated that, from a scientific point-of-view, it was essentially impossible to replicate the nutritional composition of animals. Animals are more than the addition of basic chemical elements. Fish live several years and are impacted by temperature changes, movement, and other factors, which affect the properties of the food. Mr Ojeda expressed about the long-term effects, in terms of food safety and health for humans, of cell-based products.

Elena Walden (Good Food Institute) highlighted the importance of the regulatory process to analyse the toxicology and nutritional compounds. In the available markets, the cultivated products are comparable to the conventional counterparts. Her organisation encourages policymakers to consider the issue early on, including through the provision of open access research and development funds into the sector. Public sector funding can address the long-term questions. There should be a more transparent database on approved products to facilitate exchanges between regulators. On the nutritional aspects, Ms Walden agreed that meeting the nutritional characteristics of conventional seafood was important, but, that there are also other considerations in relation to health. For example, cultured products did not face challenges related to mercury or to microplastics.

Miguel Lizaso (DG MARE) emphasised that cultured seafood products would have an effect on the market. Therefore, it was positive that members were exchanging on the fact. Mr Lizaso drew attention to a recent news article that informed that Italy was banning cultured products as a way to protect their heritage. The Commission representative argued that the consumer views also needed to be considered.

- **Way forward**

The Chair suggested amending the draft advice on “improving the labelling legislation for plant-based imitations of fisheries and aquaculture products” to also cover cultured seafood.

The Secretary General recalled that a Horizon project call was ongoing, which aimed for a better understanding of cultured meat and cultured seafood, encouraging interested members to participate in the call. As for the way forward, the Secretary General commented that several members drew attention to specific nutritional elements that were specific to the policy discussion on cultured seafood.

Guus Pastoor (Visfederatie) argued that the issues of plant-based products and cultured seafood were different, even if there was labelling policy to discuss. Therefore, in terms of advice, these should continue to be separate.

María Luisa Álvarez Blanco (FEDEPESCA) suggested asking the Commission to maintain the MAC involved in future discussions, emphasising the importance of following the developments closely.



Patrick Murphy (IS&WFPO) stated that it was important to ensure appropriate identification of the products, avoid misleading of consumers, particularly to differentiate between natural and cell-based protein. The cell-based protein should not be identified as “seafood”.

The Chair proposed the circulation of a questionnaire by the Secretariat to gather input on the different aspects discussed, which could serve as a basis for a draft advice.

Sustainable Food System Framework

- **Presentation of the results of the Secretariat’s questionnaire**

The Secretary General recalled that a questionnaire was circulated about policy options for the upcoming Commission’s impact assessment on the Sustainable Food System Framework. The Secretary General provided an overview of the replies received on “policy options for push measures – requirements within the Sustainable Food System Framework”, “policy options for push measures – sustainability labelling”, and “policy options for push measures – sustainable public procurement”. The Secretary General encouraged members to share their views on the preferred options.

- **Exchange of views about policy options for push measures, sustainability labelling, and sustainable public procurement**

María Luisa Álvarez Blanco (FEDEPESCA) congratulated the Secretary General for the excellent work in the collection of input from the members.

Quentin Marchais (ClientEarth) emphasised that, in relation to policy options for push measures – requirements within the Sustainable Food System Framework, his organisation believe that a combination of measures was essential. In terms of policy options for public procurement, ClientEarth would be more inclined to favour mandatory general and specific requirements, as the public sector should be ambitious.

- **Way forward**

The Secretary General recalled that, in the past, the MAC adopted two pieces of advice on the Sustainable Food System Framework. The Commission’s impact assessment was under development. Therefore, in his view, it would be more appropriate to wait for the conclusions of the impact assessment before drafting new advice.

Pierre Commère (ADEPALE) expressed agreement with the Secretary General, meaning that the Working Group should wait for the impact assessment.

Vice-Chair

- **Exchange of views to determine potential suggestion of Working Group 3 Vice-Chair**

The Chair recalled that the matter of Vice-Chairs for the Working Groups was raised at the latest meeting of the Executive Committee, drawing attention to Article 4 of Regulation 2015/242. The Chair



informed that an expression of interest had been received from Paulien Prent (AIPCE-CEP), while providing members an opportunity to express their interest in the position.

The Working Group agreed to suggest the approval of Paulien Prent (AIPCE-CEP) as Vice-Chair of Working Group 3 at the next Executive Committee meeting.

AOB

None.

Summary of action points

- Towards a Strong and Sustainable EU Algae Sector:
 - Secretariat to circulate a questionnaire to the members on measures to increase social awareness and market acceptance of algae and algae-based products
 - Secretariat to contact the Secretariat of the Aquaculture Advisory Council about their work on the topic and potential collaboration
- Plant-based Imitations of Fisheries and Aquaculture Products:
 - Agreed draft advice to be put forward to the Executive Committee for consideration and potential approval
- Cultured Seafood (“Lab-Grown” / “Cell-Based”):
 - Secretariat to circulate a questionnaire to the members on their views
- Sustainable Food System Framework:
 - Monitoring legislative developments, particularly the Commission’s impact assessment
- Vice-Chair:
 - Approval of Paulien Prent (AIPCE-CEP) as Vice-Chair of Working Group 3 to be suggested to the Executive Committee



Attendance List

| Representative | Organisation | Role |
|------------------------|---|----------|
| Aitana López Baquero | Spain | Observer |
| Alessandro Manghisi | Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) | Member |
| Anna Rokicka | Polish Association of Fish Processors (PSPR) | Member |
| Annelie Rosell | Swedish Pelagic Federation Producer Organisation (SPFPO) | Member |
| Annie Seng | SNCE | Member |
| Benoît Thomassen | Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP) | Chair |
| Bruno Guillaumie | European Molluscs' Producers Association (EMPA) | Member |
| Carlos Ruiz | ANFACO-CECOPESCA | Member |
| Christine Absil | Good Fish | Member |
| Daniel Voces | Europêche | Member |
| Elena García Caballero | Spain | Observer |
| Elena Walden | Good Food Institute | Expert |
| Emiel Brouckaert | European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO) | Member |
| Garazi Rodríguez Valle | APROMAR | Member |
| Georg Werner | Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) | Member |
| Guus Pastoor | Visfederatie | Member |
| Isabel Mariño Prieto | Asociación Española de Mayoristas, Importadores, Transformadores y Exportadores de Productos de la Pesca y Acuicultura (CONXEMAR) | Member |
| Javier Ojeda | Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP) | Member |
| Jean-Marie Robert | Les Pêcheurs de Bretagne | Member |
| Jens Høj Mathiesen | Danish Seafood Association | Member |
| Katarina Sipic | EU Fish Processors and Traders Association (AIPCE) / European Federation of National Organizations of Importers and Exporters of Fish (CEP) | Member |
| Luis García | Asociación Española de Mayoristas, Importadores, Transformadores y Exportadores de Productos de la Pesca y Acuicultura (CONXEMAR) | Member |



| Representative | Organisation | Role |
|----------------------------|---|-------------|
| María Luisa Álvarez Blanco | Federación de Asociaciones Provinciales de Empresarios Detallistas de Pescados y Productos Congelados (FEDEPESCA) | Member |
| Marilena Papaeti | EuroCommerce | Member |
| Marine Cusa | Oceana | Member |
| Maris Stulgis | European Commission | Expert |
| Massimo Bellavista | Copa Cogeca | Member |
| Matthias Keller | Bundesverband der deutschen Fischindustrie und des Fischgrosshandels e.V. | Member |
| Miguel Lizaso | European Commission | Expert |
| Nicolás Fernández Muñoz | OPP72 | Member |
| Noa Fontán Pérez | ANFACO-CECOPECA | Member |
| Paolo Giuseppe Ubaldi | EuroCommerce | Member |
| Patrick Murphy | Irish South & West Fish Producers Organisation (IS&WFPO) | Member |
| Paul Thomas | European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO) | Member |
| Pedro Luis Casado López | Asociación de Armadores Punta del Moral (OPP80) | Member |
| Pedro Reis Santos | Market Advisory Council (MAC) | Secretariat |
| Pierre Commère | Association Des Entreprises de Produits Alimentaires Élaborés (ADEPALE) | Member |
| Pim Visser | VisNed | Member |
| Poul Jensen | Danish Seafood Association | Member |
| Quentin Marchais | ClientEarth | Member |
| Rosalie Tukker | Europêche | Member |
| Sean O'Donoghue | Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation (KFO) | Member |
| Sergio López García | OPP Puerto de Burela | Member |
| Tintti Vitikkala | Market Advisory Council | Secretariat |
| Vanya Vulperhorst | Oceana | Member |
| Yobana Bermúdez | EU Fish Processors and Traders Association (AIPCE) | Member |

